

Competing and contesting constructions of 'modern' womanhood: A vertical case study  
examining the effects of international development discourse on marriage and education  
in rural Upper Egypt

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**Note on transliteration**

In this dissertation I follow a simplified version of the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (IJMES) system of transliteration. Most diacritical marks have been omitted, and proper nouns are given English spellings where applicable.

## Abstract

In the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) education is widely understood to play a key role in promoting gender equality and economic empowerment. In the MENA region generally, and Egypt in particular, “early-marriage” is implicated as one of the main barriers to educational access for girls living in rural areas. In 2001 inspired by the Egyptian Government’s commitment to the principles of the United Nations Girls’ Education Initiative (UNGEI), Population Council in Egypt developed Ishraq, a literacy and life-skills program targeting rural and adolescent out-of-school girls in Upper Egypt.

This dissertation examines how conceptions of womanhood are framed at varying levels of the international development landscape, and the extent to which they affect and are affected by national policy considerations (represented by the UNGEI and the Ishraq Program) and local understandings around education and marriage in rural Upper Egypt. This research is guided by the assumption that education policy formation is grounded in particular values regarding the role and purpose of education for girls. Through utilizing a vertically-oriented design, this dissertation explores how international and national policy discussions come to shape the construction and implementation of development programs targeting girls at local levels.

Emerging from my conversations, interviews, and many observations — with former Ishraq participants, program stakeholders, and other young women in rural Upper Egypt — are varied experiences and understandings that participants related regarding what it means to be a “modern” women in rural Upper Egypt during this current revolutionary moment. What is revealed is an interplay between transnational development discourse and how particular women in rural Upper Egypt women engage in the social contests concerning marriage and education. The experiences and understandings of participants situated at the most local levels suggest a dynamism and complexity around these social contests that is all but left out of the prevailing policy documents, program materials, and among the views of those responsible of the funding and design of the Ishraq program. Moreover, participants’ experiences with safety and security in rural Upper Egypt during this most recent period of political transition appears to be contributing to the further isolation of rural communities.

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Figure 2.1. Overview of research design (pg. 89)

## Glossary of Abbreviations and Acronyms

AUC.....	American University in Cairo
BPFA.....	Beijing Platform for Action
CAPMAS.....	Central Authority for Public Mobilization and Statistics
CARE.....	Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere
CDA.....	Critical Discourse Analysis
DAE.....	Department of Adult Education
EFA.....	Education For All (Movement)
EIHS.....	Egypt Integrated Household Survey
EKN.....	Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands
ELMS.....	Egypt Labor Market Survey
FJP.....	Freedom and Justice Party
GCPEA.....	Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack
GEIE.....	Girls Education Initiative, Egypt
IMF.....	International Monetary Fund
IRB.....	Institutional Review Board
MDGs.....	Millennium Development Goals
MENA.....	Middle East and North Africa
MoE.....	Ministry of Education
MoY.....	Ministry of Youth
ODYE.....	Organization for the Development of Youth and the Environment
PSL.....	Personal Status Law
NCCM.....	National Council for Childhood and Motherhood
NCW.....	National Council for Women
NGO.....	Non-governmental Organization
UNESCO.....	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UNGEI.....	United Nations Girls Education Initiative
UNICEF.....	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
USAID.....	United States Agency for International Development
WID.....	Women in Development (Movement)

## **Glossary of Arabic Terms**

*Fouda*: Literally means chaos; in the context of this study this term is used as the Arabic equivalent to Mitchell's (1988) understanding of *chaos* as part of a broader postmodern critique of the order-chaos binary fashioned largely by Western colonial authorities and indigenous modernizing and nationalist discourses during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries throughout the Middle East and North Africa.

*Gihaz*: The sets of home furnishings typically the responsibility of the betrothed and/or her family as part of her and/or her family's contribution to the marriage.

*Nizam*: Literally means system; in the context of this study this term is used as the Arabic equivalent to Mitchell's (1988) understanding of *order* as part of a broader postmodern critique of the order-chaos binary fashioned largely by Western colonial authorities and indigenous modernizing and nationalist discourses during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries throughout the Middle East and North Africa.





## Chapter One

### Introduction

For decades, women and girls have been the focus of international development strategies. In the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), the social status of women is associated not only with gender equality, but also with national development policies that are often characterized as ‘progressive’ and ‘modern’ (Hasso, 2009). While development remains multi-faceted, education is widely understood to play a key role in promoting gender equality and economic empowerment. Since the late 1990s much of the prevailing literature concerning girls’ education in Egypt focused largely on providing greater access to educational opportunities (Herrera & Torres, 2006). Recent scholarship suggests policies targeting girls’ education should be informed by research identifying impediments to educational access and determinants of educational quality in order to maximize the economic potential of women (Dancer & Rammohan, 2007, & Assaad et al., 2010). In the MENA region generally, and in Egypt particularly, “early-marriage” is implicated as one of the main barriers to educational access for girls<sup>1</sup>. It is presumed that early-marriage and child rearing can negatively affect a woman’s ability to access education, and consequently the labor market. For decades, delaying marriage and reducing fertility rates among women in the global south has been instrumental in increasing educational access for girls and women (Johnson-Hanks, 2006). In Egypt, policy makers have developed projects and programs that increased school enrollment among girls (Assaad, Levison, & Zibani, 2010). The most notable of these policies was the Girls Education Initiative (UNGEI), a partnership between the United Nations and the

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<sup>1</sup>Here “early marriage” is defined as any marriage that takes place before the age of 18 as the Convention on the Rights of the Child suggests childhood extends until that age (Unicef, 2005).

national government of Egypt (GEIE). This initiative emerged ten years after the birth of the Education for All (EFA) declaration in 1990. Implicit in these initiatives is the view they positively impact girls by fostering a sense of economic independence, empowerment, and contributing to national growth and development (Unicef, 2007).

Since the start of the Egypt's 2011 January revolution, calls for addressing issues concerning the well being of women have been met simultaneously with excitement, ambivalence, and opposition. The revolutionary landscape is made up of competing actors who are informed by differing political, ideological, and religious positions concerning the ways in which women ought to participate in public life (Sholkamy, 2012). While increasing educational access for girls' is necessary, a focus on access alone falls short of addressing the myriad of structural and contextual constraints faced by woman and girls on a daily basis in Egypt and across the MENA region (Herrera, 2006). Particular claims to knowledge and truth regarding the relationship between marriage and girls' education help sustain certain configurations of power on the international, national, and local level. As a result women's lives, bodies, and public visibility are important sites where discourses of development, nation, and modernity operate, particularly during this tumultuous transition.

### **Problem statement**

In the MENA region, years of schooling for women has not typically translated into individual economic gains, which is counter to what is observed in other regions. In the coming decade, Egypt is projected to join Jordan and the Arab Gulf States as countries where women have eclipsed men in enrollment and school completion, yet they

make up less than one-third of Egypt's formal labor force (Amin & Al-Bassusi, 2004, UNDP, 2010). Many of the leading policy papers (Arab Human Development Report, 2009 & Egypt Human Development Report, 2010) suggest traditional beliefs and local customs serve as the primary impediment to equal access for women to the labor market and the public sphere at large. Characterizations of cultural values as inherently gender biased, static, and presumably insurmountable without intervention are at the least, problematic (Adely, 2012). These understandings, often rooted in pre-colonial and colonial-era assumptions about the role religion and tradition play in shaping education policy in the MENA region, make it difficult to examine the ways in which the international development community and national governments may also be empowering patriarchy (Hasso, 2009). This discourse also makes invisible the role the revolution is playing in providing the platform for the re-shaping of Egypt's social and political landscape.

This, what I term the *failed-culture* strategy for human development, is guided mostly by unchanging representations of local norms and values. This narrow understanding of human development tends to produce top-down policy directives for adapting or eradicating prevalent behaviors determined to negatively affect the prospects for liberal economic, social, and political reform in the region. Failed-culture strategies also tend to obscure the social contests that are embodied in "culture". In Egypt, this is represented in the competing understandings concerning the revolution and through the bureaucratic approach the government in Cairo employs in formulating national development priorities. International development agencies and donor organizations

almost always need to partner with the Egyptian government in order to implement a given project. Beyond the view that this is a logistical necessity, it is often understood to enhance the prospects of sustainability and localization of a project. While Egyptian policy makers may know “Egypt” better than an external donor agency, the largely urban, Egyptian political elite (from all sides of the ideological spectrum) tends to carry around the same assumptions about their poor and often rural countrymen and women. As a result, national development projects that target rural areas and/or marginalized populations often do so under the sometimes explicitly stated assumption that local norms and customs are ultimately to blame for underdevelopment (Hopkins & Saad, 2004). Failed-culture approaches fall short of addressing the vast array of contextual and structural factors that constrain opportunity. Given the preceding considerations, arguments implicating family traditions and social conservatism in producing early marriages and therefore negatively affecting educational prospects for girls and women, are inadequate. Understandings regarding the intersection of marriage and education are dynamic, as they tend to change over time and vary across differing contexts (Johnson-Hanks, 2006).

### **Study purpose**

This study aims to examine the ways in which conceptions of womanhood are framed at varying levels of the international development landscape, and the extent to which they affect and are affected by national policy considerations and local understandings around education and marriage in rural Upper Egypt. This research is guided by the assumption that education policy formation is grounded in particular values

regarding the role and purpose of education for girls and women. Through utilizing a vertically-oriented design, this research explores the ways in which international and national policy discussions come to shape the construction and implementation of development programs targeting women and girls at local levels. Situating education policy in a vertical case illuminates the variable effects policies tend to produce as they move across and between different international, national, and local levels (Vavrus & Bartlett, 2009).

More specifically, this study examines Population Council's Ishraq (Enlightenment) program for adolescent out-of-school girls, in light of the education reform effort brought on by the 2000 United Nations Girls Education Initiative (UNGEI), and subsequent Girls Education Initiative Egypt (GEIE). This qualitative study will examine these policy reforms by utilizing a multi-sited ethnographic approach, drawing on some elements of critical discourse analysis (CDA). CDA its theoretical underpinnings and related methodological considerations are discussed later in this chapter and in Chapter Three. In addressing the local components of this study I conducted interviews with and observed Ishraq program personnel and a select group of participants formerly associated with the program from across rural Upper Egypt. The aim was to draw out local understandings surrounding marriage and education, and to examine the extent to which they reflect values and underlying assumptions articulated by in the respective narratives of Population Council, UNGEI, and GEIE.

## **Origins of the study**

I began to pursue this particular dissertation topic due to an interest in the literature that is examined in Chapter Two and to my personal experiences as an Egyptian-American male educator. I did not originally set out to address the topic of girls' education in relation to the events associated with Egypt's 2011 January revolution and its aftermath. However, in large part due to my experiences traveling between the United States and Egypt over the last four years, I have found the revolution to be an inescapable reality of most Egyptians I worked with and encountered through day-to-day interactions. Future discussions regarding the ways in which development discourse informs Egyptian public policy must take place against the backdrop of the changing social and political landscape. As a result, the revolution now rests firmly at the center of this analysis. The following accounts of exchanges I had in June 2012 and 2013 help illustrate the complexity the revolution adds to the landscape of policy discourse on what it may mean to be a 'modern' Egyptian woman. Lastly, these interactions prompted me to tackle very specific questions both personally and as a researcher, some of which I raise in the coming sections.

### **Decent Egyptian girls**

On a warm, summer Cairo afternoon, in the days after the first round of the presidential elections that saw newly ousted Egyptian president and Freedom and Justice Party's (FJP) Mohamed Morsi and former Mubarak-era prime minister Ahmed Shafiq emerge as frontrunners, I sat with two Egyptian women<sup>2</sup>. One in her early 50s and the other in early 70s, they sat over tea discussing the recent political developments. I have

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<sup>2</sup> The FJP is the political party that represented the Muslim Brotherhood (El Houdaiby, 2012).

known these women for a long time, which made the nature of our conversation quite intimate. At first, the discussion took a mostly friendly tone; the women were interested in my impressions of Egypt as a *Khawaga*, a foreigner, albeit one of Egyptian origin. I indicated that it was the first time I had returned to Egypt since the start of the revolution and that “things” were now certainly different. The conversation took a more serious turn when the issue of continued planned demonstrations was raised. Both women agreed the continued instability brought on by the protests was problematic and needed to stop even though they held very different positions regarding the necessity of the revolution itself. As the conversation continued, the intensity grew, as did the sound of their voices. At one point, the older woman shouted, “and the women go down to The (Tahrir) Square (to demonstrate)! Who do they think they are, and where are their mothers?” To which the younger woman responded, “those women should know better, demonstrations are not a place for *banat masraya muhtarama* (decent Egyptian girls), spending all that time between all those men! They (the women demonstrators) should either get married or return to their partners instead of wasting their time demonstrating.” By this point it became clear to me these women had a strong sense of the role Egyptian women ought to play in revolutionary politics and how they ought to behave. Despite the richness of this exchange, one cannot draw conclusions from this anecdote alone to implicate the whole of Egyptian society for these women’s problematic assessment of their civically inclined countrywomen. Further, I found it quite peculiar that the issue of marriage, seemingly unrelated, was raised in the discussion as the solution for those women who are bitten by the proverbial revolutionary bug.

**‘The habits and traditions of Upper Egyptians need to change’**

Just as these ongoing debates raise issues about the role of women in public life, development discourses on girls’ education reveal a similar social, political, and ideological contest. Almost one year later to the day, in a beautifully ornate hotel overlooking the Nile located in the upscale Garden City district of downtown Cairo, I attended a one-day event (as part of research internship position I held in the Cairo office of an American NGO) celebrating the conclusion of an educational intervention program that targeted out-of-school girls in rural Upper Egypt. This conference brought together representatives from international development (donor and partnering) agencies, government ministries and departments, and local NGOs to highlight successes and make the case for “institutionalizing” or handing over the program to national and local governmental and non-governmental organizations.

In addition to discussing strategies for carefully transitioning the program, almost all of the nearly 15 presenters remarked that despite the program’s success, the most pronounced obstacle to its sustainability are local habits, traditions, and understandings concerning girls’ education. The clear lack of communication that was exhibited and competing interests raised by attendees was simply addressed by organizers as, “the cost of doing business in Egypt,” a logistical nuisance. In a panel discussion that opened the event, three representatives from among the programs’ partners shared comments regarding the role of women in the overall development of Egypt. An ambassador from an EU state was given the opportunity to speak first and he stated, “economic self-reliance can help protect women from gender based violence and subsequently promote



gender equality in Egypt.” The (former) head of the Ministry of Youth and leading member of the Freedom and Justice Party in his comments stated that<sup>3</sup>:

It is imperative as we move forward that we focus national development efforts on women. Men and women stood together as partners during our glorious revolution; did we forget that they (women) brought us water while we fought on the front lines in Tahrir and elsewhere?

Lastly, in her remarks (mostly directed at the Minister of Youth) the head of the National Council for Women suggested that:

The only way that the revolution will be successful is by making sure that women are no longer treated as second class citizens...the habits and traditions that have our daughters married off at young ages need to change, the revolution should move us forward not backward.

These comments and concerns represent more than just organizational constraints that affect program implementation. While these three representatives presented very different ideas concerning the role of women in national development, they also show an appropriation of the revolution for developmental aims. Interestingly enough, none of the local program managers from Upper Egypt (all of whom were in attendance) contributed anything other than a couple clarifying remarks during conference. Their perspectives, and the perspectives of the girls who participated in the program, were presented in a short video that was shown after opening comments were made.

The perspectives presented in these vignettes represent marriage as a status of respectability and gendered regulation. This understanding suggests, for Egyptian women, marriage is a life-juncture that carries the promise of choice and opportunity as well as further social and structural constraint. These experiences and ideas ultimately

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<sup>3</sup> Following the July 3, 2013 ouster of Mohamed Morsi, nearly all members of the president’s cabinet tendered their resignations including the minister of youth affairs (Al Ahram Online, 2013).

brought me to ponder a much broader question that I hope this research will slowly begin to address; how, when, and by whom is ‘culture,’ particularly in the MENA region, implicated as an impediment to ‘progress’? Also, is it possible to disentangle narrow understandings of ‘culture’ from the dominant development discourse by investigating (in the context of a dynamic, fluid, and ever-changing social and political landscape of revolutionary Egypt) the ways in which local people understand the role marriage ought to play in their lives? Lastly, in what ways do transnational and national development discourses relate to local conceptions regarding marriage and girls’ education in revolutionary Egypt?

### **Research questions**

By considering the implications of these broad questions, and through the examination of the literature and exploration of the research context, the following focused questions will guide the research for this dissertation: (1) In what ways do the discourse/s associated with the UNGEI and GEIE relate to the stated values, principles and objectives of the Ishraq program? (2) How do former Ishraq participants, non-participants, and Ishraq stakeholders articulate the relationship between marriage and girls’ education? (3) How do former Ishraq participants, non-participants, and Ishraq stakeholders, articulate the relationship between the Egyptian revolution and issues surrounding girls’ education in rural Upper Egypt?

### **Overview of conceptual framework**

To address these research questions, this study employs a critical poststructural approach to policy analysis informed to a large extent by postcolonial critiques, namely

Orientalism (Said, 1978). Said's (1978) seminal work *Orientalism* explores how the process of fashioning the Middle East region as coherent and essentially homogeneous serves varying purposes. This is carried out most importantly through the West's domination — since the 17<sup>th</sup> century and onward through the colonial period — of the process of knowledge production concerning what can and cannot be known about the region, whereby the West is able to maintain civilizational superiority. This approach draws on the contributions of the field of sociology, philosophy, linguistics, and cultural anthropology. Over the last two decades, educational researchers have utilized poststructural approaches to explain human phenomenon as socially constructed and historically and contextually contingent on power differentials (Howarth & Griggs, 2012). With regard to educational policy analysis, this approach attempts to apply interpretive logics to sociocultural worlds at various levels of policy construction, negotiation, and localizations (Levinson & Sutton, 2001). Practically speaking, poststructural approaches expand policy analysis to include a broader range of questions concerning power, more so than conventional outcomes based analysis that utilizes linear and inferential reasoning. Further, policy formulation is viewed as an act of power and policy discourse as a legitimating practice. In short, this approach is adept for examining far-reaching implications of policy formulation and the social effects that are not captured by mainstream development metrics (Adams et al., 2001). In this study the poststructural lens—particularly a critical attention to the formation and operation of discourse—is applied to the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of the GEIE and the Ishraq program. Further, in the context of this study, I argue that utilizing a poststructural

analytical frame would not be complete without troubling the notion that marriage and girls' education are inescapably bound to one another. A thorough examination of education policy requires a deeper understanding of the structural complexities girls and women face with regard to traversing the terrain of marriage and education (Johnson-Hanks, 2006).

### **Discursive effects**

There are many definitions of what constitutes discourse; most scholars agree that they are essentially ways of knowing, or the product of the relationship between knowledge and power (Gee, 2004). Further, critical and poststructural analyses of discourse are most interested in their relationship to power, knowledge, and truth (Foucault, 1975, 1977). For instance, by examining the verbal and written expression associated with promoting a specific sort of education policy we can begin to understand the ways in which certain knowledge is legitimated and reproduced. In effect, discourse should not be examined alone but with regard to what it produces or legitimates in the form of knowledge and human behavior or practice. The focus on discursive effects ultimately serves to highlight the systematizing effects discourse has on the ways people think and behave within a particular social, cultural, and historical context (Mills, 1997). This understanding is central to this conceptual framework as particular claims to truth and knowledge are discursively situated and implicated in relations of power. In this vein, this study attempts to advance the use of discursive effects for examining the interplay between dominant development discourse and local conceptions regarding marriage and

girls' education and also local peoples' attempt to take ownership of these local conceptions as a form of resistance to the dominant notions of development.

Also central to this conceptual framework is what Foucault (1969, 1972) terms the *unity of discourses*, or the interplay of the rules that make it possible for us to see an "object" in the social world. In the case of this study the object is "womanhood", and it is through the events of daily life (gender based discrimination, harassment, violence, etc.) where we see discourses come together to reinforce normative conceptions of womanhood. In the context of this study, the use of this lens attempts to address this interplay in order to uncover the deeply imbedded structural realities that bolster normative conceptions of womanhood in Egypt. It can also help illuminate the ways in which these realities can change over time and in particular relative to the Egyptian revolution and the events that continue to surround its development.

### **Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)**

Since the 1970s alternative modes of social inquiry have emerged for examining and interpreting the discursive frameworks surrounding the process of knowledge production. This development has been particularly useful for scholars in the field of comparative education who view education policy analysis from the interpretivist/constructivist lens. Through this lens, knowledge is not only understood as social constructed but is also moderated by dynamic power relations at various levels of society. Policies as suggested by Levinson and Sutton (2001) are uniquely dynamic social, political, and cultural constructions (taking verbal and textual form) steeped in power and authority. As a result, discourse oriented policy analysis was developed for

systematizing examinations of the power/knowledge in an attempt to disentangle the dominant value laden texts associated with education policy.

Until the early 1990s much of what was identified as “discourse analysis” focused on (previously described) Foucauldian conceptions regarding the power/knowledge relationship. The works of Fairclough (1992), Gee (1999), Rogers (2004), and Vavrus and Seghers (2010) represent an extension of these ideas and new directions for using discourse analysis in education policy research. As a result, critical discourse analysis (CDA) emerges as a conceptual framework grounded in critical theory and linguistics, while still drawing from the contributions of postmodernism and poststructuralism. Critical approaches to discourse analysis vary from Foucauldian approaches in that they aim to both identify and confront the discursive effects of language used in policy documents, and draw out the critique to include the social and cultural contexts where these expressions of power exist (Fairclough, 1989). CDA provides the appropriate conceptual framework and method of inquiry for critically examining the ways in which marriage and girls’ education are framed in the GEIE, and how these understandings are expressed in the context of the Ishraq program.

There are also particular methodological considerations that must be taken to account regarding the use of CDA. Fairclough (1989) suggests this approach to policy analysis operates from a very specific mode of inquiry as it examines the linguistic relationship between knowledge construction and power. Methodologically speaking, CDA centers on an examination of what Vavrus and Seghers (2010) call “linguistic elements of spoken and written text, such as grammar, vocabulary and cohesion” (p. 78).

The analytical tools associated with CDA this research employs are addressed in greater detail in Chapter Three.

### **Vital conjunctures and liminality**

The examination of “life transitions” is central to this study and as such this conceptual framework draws on contributions from both sociocultural anthropology and anthropological demography. In his seminal work, Turner (1967) argues by emphasizing life’s transitions or “liminal periods” we can begin to examine the point (or points) of individual’s lives in which they have not yet fully developed into who they are supposed to become. Further, Turner’s (1967) work was most interested in the rites of passage that define the liminal period. However, a deeper examination of the authors work reveals that the liminal period is also a life stage filled with simultaneously limited and limitless possibilities and potentialities. Turner (1967) suggests that transitioning through the liminal period promises the individual newfound liberty only if it is exercised within the bounds of the social mandate. This idea is also to some extent congruent with a Foucauldian logic (1969, 1972), which describes social formations as bounded within discourses; that is to say, “new” social forms are created within a particular context.

While this study is interested in advancing understandings around the liminal periods associated with rites of passage (marriage and school completion), it is more interested in examining the role *choice* and *agency* play before, during, and after life transitions<sup>4</sup>. In order to address this issue, this conceptual framework draws on the contributions of researcher and sociocultural demographer Jennifer Johnson-Hanks. Like

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<sup>4</sup> By “agency” I refer to the ability and extent to which individuals (agents) feel they can make life decisions independently of others (Ahearn, 2001).

Turner (1967), Johnson-Hanks (2006) also argues that the unit of social description in social science inquiry ought to focus on liminal periods or what she calls *vital conjunctures*. The vital conjuncture in some ways is seen as an extension of Bourdieu's (1972, 1977) theory of practice. An important distinction is that the notion of vital conjuncture is not nearly as rooted in traditional structuralism, which diminishes the role that individual agency plays in shaping sociocultural landscapes. Accordingly, vital conjunctures are described as, "socially constructed zones of possibility that emerge around specific periods of transformation in a life or lives" (p. 22). As an emergent set of circumstances, the conditions associated with vital conjunctures are temporary and produce certain possibilities for an individual or individuals.

In this study, this conceptualization can be helpful in understanding issues like secondary school completion for rural Upper Egyptian girls during a time of rapid social and political transformation. The questions concerning "the future" these young women often ask include: Will I move on to college, university, or not at all? Will I marry and whom will I marry? Will I work (and where)? While these possibilities may appear as a set of choices or decisions one can simply reach independently, they are more accurately described as contingent on one's position within complex social and political dimensions of power and authority within a given society. This is not to suggest that individual agency has no role in shaping futures. Rather, since the potential possibilities an individual faces at the vital conjuncture are often not a product of their own construction, the characterization of vital conjunctures as "choices" is seemingly incomplete and uncomplicated. Egypt's revolutionary context also adds to circumstances that constrain



life possibilities and decision-making, as the changing political configurations have not generally been concerned with expanding and enhancing women's social and political agency (Sholkamy, 2012). The lens of the vital conjuncture informs my examination of the intersection of marriage and education in Egypt today. This is an essential consideration as these transitions are understood to be contingent on observed social and political power differentials from within Egyptian society, as well as with regard to the dominant development discourse concerning girls' education and marriage conceived externally.

### **Examining the research context**

Robust descriptions of the research context are an important element that ties the theoretical orientation of this dissertation to the research design. Descriptions help contextualize the data that will be collected and provide nuanced understandings of the discourse surrounding girls' education and marriage in Egypt. This section discusses the landscape of international development education in Egypt at various levels. This will provide the necessary context for the discussion and analysis of the literature examined in Chapter Two concerning the different logics for promoting girls' education in Egypt.

### **Modern education in Egypt**

Prior to the 1830's Al-Azhar's mosque-university shouldered the burden of basic education through their *Quranic* and religious schools<sup>5</sup>. It was not until the rule of Muhammad Ali (1805-1849) when modern secular education or state sponsored mass-schooling appeared in Egypt. In 1836, he created a modern system of education modeled

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<sup>5</sup> Al-Azhar is Egypt's oldest, largest, and most influential institution of Islamic learning and one of the leading centers of Sunni Islamic thought and jurisprudence in the world (Faksh, 1976).

after those found in Britain and France. Despite educational reforms, religious schools were independent from Egypt's political leadership, and therefore existed alongside the newly created schools (Faksh, 1976).

Following the reign of Ismail, Muhammad Ali's grandson, Egypt succumbed to British colonial forces. From 1882-1922, Egypt was a formal colony of the British Empire. In 1919, the Egyptian resistance led by Saad Zaghloul ended with the British declaring Egypt independent. Despite this independence, the British continued to rule through a continued military presence and behind the scenes political posturing. Seeing the growth in university education as a threat to their rule led the British to adopt a strict policy of abandonment with regard to funding, thus destroying universal education (Faksh, 1976). Under British control, Egypt allocated less than one percent of the national budget to education, and the illiteracy rate soared to 92 percent. The Egyptian Resistance of 1919 put pressure on the government to increase funding for education. Due to strong political pressure around education, in 1923 the newly independent Egyptian government passed a law effectively making education free and compulsory for children ages 7-12. This led to slow but steady growth in enrollment, and by the "Free Officers" coup of 1952 there were close to two million students in government schools at all levels across the country (Faksh, 1980).

Led by Gamal Abdel-Nasser, the Free Officers succeeded in formally dissolving the monarchy and forming a republic. The revolutionary period was best characterized by its strong commitment to universal basic education and growth among universities and vocational schools. The revolutionary government succeeded in increasing the total

number of enrolled students in 1952 from 45 percent of eligible children to 80 percent of eligible children by 1967 (Faksh, 1976). Egypt's two wars with Israel (1967 & 1973), coupled with one of the highest birthrates in the world, led to a slowing in economic growth. With the arrival of the oil industry and subsequent economic growth in the Arab states of the Gulf, Egyptian expatriate communities in these countries considerable through the late 1970s (Mitchell, 2002). In order to address these challenges, in 1973-74 Anwar Sadat introduced the country's economy to private investment through his neoliberal oriented "open-door" policy. This policy is now understood as having increased the wealth of mostly large business owners, friends of the ruling-class, and few others. The open-door policy along with the conditions associated with the Camp David peace accords ushered in a new era of economic, and by some accounts, political dependence in Egypt not seen since the days of British occupation (El-Mahdi & Marfleet, 2009). These conditions also contributed to rise in the NGO sector, as the national government was understood to be largely ineffective at meeting the basic economic, social, and political needs of most Egyptians. This is further complicated by the fact that Egypt was (and remains to this day) the second largest recipient of United States foreign aid. This reality ultimately makes the development landscape in Egypt much more politically charged and contentious (Korany & El-Mahdi, 2012).

With regard to issues of educational access the 1980s and 90s proved to be just as challenging as the country's economic conditions. In the early 1990s, the number of girls out of school was well over a half million. By 1996 the World Bank reported Egypt to have a 55.6 percent literacy rate (Zaalouk, 2004). These events coupled with the birth of

the EFA movement serve as the impetus for nearly all the subsequent governmental and non-governmental work in girls' education and Egypt over the last two decades.

### **The Girls' Education Initiative Egypt (GEIE)**

In an effort to meet EFA goals concerning global gender disparities in education, the United Nations created the Girls Education Initiative (UNGEI). Established by the UN Secretary General at the World Education Forum in April of 2000, the UNGEI is charged with increasing and enhancing educational access and quality for girls. One of the key goals of UNGEI is to reduce the gender gap in educational access and quality at the primary and secondary levels by 2005 for all countries. Under the leadership of UNICEF, the UNGEI worked first with national governments and later with local NGOs to develop interventions to address the unique challenges of each country (UNICEF, 2007).

A few months after the formation of the UNGEI, a working team made up of government officials, scholars, and development experts was formed. This marked the beginning of the Girls' Education Initiative in Egypt. Led by the former education minister, the Secretary General of the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood (NCCM), and leading staff from the UNICEF MENA office in Amman, Jordan, the GEIE outlined plans for implementing the directives associated with the UNGEI and the goals of the EFA movement broadly. This included the creation of a GEI National Taskforce, which was responsible for bringing together government ministries and coordinating a streamlined response to the challenges Egypt faced concerning girls' education. Another priority of the National Taskforce was to create projects and programs to provide

educational access to Egypt's then nearly 400,000 out-of-school girls. With the help of their partners from UNICEF, the National Taskforce also developed some measures for evaluation and assessment of GEIE associated projects and programs (UNICEF, 2007). As will be discussed in greater detail in the coming section, much of the development work that was undertaken in Egypt before and after the establishment of the GEIE was concentrated in rural Upper Egypt.

As part of the UN strategy for addressing gender disparity in education, the GEIE has also inspired many other development education programs and projects. While the GEIE sanctioned the creation of schools and the integration of other UNICEF projects, many seemingly unaffiliated projects and programs have emerged in response to the mandate that was granted to the National Taskforce. Due to the all-encompassing nature of the GEIE and the mostly technically oriented assistance the UNICEF partnership provided, many projects originally conceived outside of the charge of the National Taskforce later came under the umbrella of their mandate. These circumstances provided local and international NGOs the opportunity to make the case that their projects and programs move Egypt towards meeting EFA goals, and as a result should be supported financially and otherwise (UNICEF, 2007). In the context of this dissertation research, a critical examination of the GEIE and the projects and programs it has produced is central to considering the ways in which transnational and national development discourses priorities affect localized conceptions regarding marriage and girls' education in revolutionary Egypt. It is also essential to this study, and to understanding the scope of

the GEIE, that this analysis includes contextual information regarding the landscape of education and development in rural Upper Egypt.

### **Egypt as “modern” development state**

Between the 1970s and 1990s much of the discourse around development in Egypt revolved around framing the country as a victim of demographic misfortune, requiring the intervention of economic and technical experts. Throughout this period, many development agencies (World Bank, IMF, USAID, and UNFPA) outlined overpopulation, lack of resources, and small amounts of useable land as main points of departure en route to solving Egypt’s economic development quandary. While Egypt has always been defined by its geography, during this period the understanding proved to be an effective tool for policy makers as it employed the static language of “nature” to describe the country’s postcolonial development landscape (Mitchell, 2002). Mitchell (2002) argues that the following historical narratives created the conditions for undertaking future development, and served as a discursive formation, preempting considerations of power associated with alternative explanations for the challenges of economic development.

In July of 1972, with the help of American diplomats, the late Egyptian president Anwar Sadat successfully negotiated Egypt’s diplomatic break from the Soviet Union<sup>6</sup>. This ended a decades long military and diplomatic relationship with the Soviets and marked a shift in Egyptian foreign policy more aligned with the West and the United

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<sup>6</sup> Most popular accounts characterize this event as, Sadat’s “expulsion of the Soviets”. However, examination of recently declassified communiqués reveals that not only was the Soviet Union aware the U. S. and Egypt were working together, they were active in negotiating the terms of their military and diplomatic withdrawal from Egypt (Gilnor & Remez, 2007).

States in particular (El-Mahdi & Marfleet, 2009). Following the aforementioned economic policies of the open-door era, the Egyptian economy for the first time since the end of the colonial period was open to large-scale minimally regulated foreign and private investment. El-Mahdi and Marfleet (2009) argue that this policy shift made Egypt into a “laboratory for neoliberalism” as the Sadat-led government made the country more available to the forces of the global economy namely the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. Egypt’s newfound economic openness to the United States reached new political heights in 1978-79 with the Camp David Accords, and the subsequent U.S. brokered Egypt-Israel peace treaty. The result of the treaty with Israel was not received with the same enthusiasm in Egypt as it was in the United States. Nonetheless, the peace treaty paved the way for future U.S. based investment in Egypt in the form of military aid and training, and development assistance through USAID and with NGO partners (Marfleet, 2009).

The preceding events have undoubtedly come to shape the ways in which the West engages Egypt politically and diplomatically. However, the emergence of Egypt as a modern development state as understood in the context of this study is more dependent on historical framing than the developments associated with the wartime era of the early 1970s (Mitchell, 2002). It has been argued that much of the development work undertaken in the MENA region has been largely guided by narrow characterizations of local culture. With regard to the Egyptian case, this consideration emerges from a particular set of historical developments informed by the colonial experience, militarist state socialism, the neoliberal economic revolution of the 1980s and 1990s, and the rise in

the economic and political role of NGOs during of the Mubarak period (Marfleet, 2009).

While the failed-culture approach remains at the core of explaining contemporary development work, other explanations have also played a role in fashioning Egypt into a modern development state whose economy requires unrelenting intervention. As a result, the ways in which demographic, political, and economic dimensions framed as “objects of development” have fashioned Egypt into the development state it is today.

With regard to overpopulation, Mitchell (2002) suggests that the World Bank in a 1989 report painted Egypt as a country where more than 50 million people are crowded into the narrow Nile valley. In comparison to Bangladesh and Indonesia, Egypt is much more densely populated. However, when compared to Thailand and the Philippines countries of similar population, per capita GDP, and more cultivated agricultural land, Egypt appears much differently as its agricultural land produces far greater yields than both countries. Issues concerning overpopulation have also been taken up in the context of Egypt lacking the resources to keep up with growth rates. Again the author makes that point that while the World Bank was reporting annual growth rates during this period of around two percent, agricultural production was growing at an annual rate close to three percent. This does not include the tremendous increase in grain imports. By the early 1980s Egypt became one of the world largest importers of wheat and this still remains the case today. By no means does this suggest that between 1970 and 1990 Egypt had a model economy. As indicated previously the open-door era created greater wealth disparities by focusing economic development on private investment favoring large corporate interests from abroad. The argument against the logics of the World Bank and



other development institutions lies in that they failed to explain the challenges of economic development in terms that do not require significant external intervention. Mitchell (2002) argues that what appear as limitations of Egypt's development potential due to presumably natural circumstances are more carefully preformed considerations steeped in power and privilege. The near exclusive focus on Egypt's geography does not address structural and/or political sources of disparities in wealth or the inaccessibility of markets for farmers and small business owners from rural and peripheral urban communities. An emphasis on intervention as the preeminent strategy for economic development esteems the perspective of external and internal "experts", and has fashioned Egypt into the modern development state it is today.

With the early 1990s comes a decided shift in discourse, from framing discussions of development in Egypt in terms of geographic impediments towards social ones. As understandings that framed development in Egypt as a "crisis in geography" waned the focus began to shift towards other "objects of development" that were previously absent from consideration, the Egyptian people (Mitchell, 2002). While not completely abandoning the demographically framed challenges brought on by the likes of the "marriage crisis" of the 1990s and 2000s, this more recent period is best represented as favoring social and cultural explanations of regarding the challenges of development.

In becoming the target of development efforts, and since the birth of the EFA movement, much the focus of development concerning girls' education in Egypt has been undertaken in the southern region known as the Sa'id or Upper Egypt (Zaalouk, 2004, Unicef, 2007). This region includes many cities, towns, and villages and offers residents

a diversity of livelihoods in farming, manufacturing, and in the civil service. However, this mainly agricultural area is by most accounts home to some of the poorest governorates of the 27 that make up the republic, making it one of the poorest regions in the country. Additionally, school enrollment and completion rates for girls and young women in this region rank among the lowest, a trend that has slowly reversed in recent years (Population Council, 2010).

### **Situating debates: girls' education, national identity, and marriage**

Since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, girls' education has been at the center of one of the more intense ongoing political contests concerning national identity formation in Egypt. While not always the case, politicians, religious leaders, members of the press, and political activists have mostly taken up the debate over girls' education in relation to its affect on marriage and the family (Russell, 2004). The British colonial presence, which lasted until 1922, played a key role in shaping many of the post-colonial political and economic arrangements. Nonetheless, statutory and material issues concerning marriage were almost entirely left to the local Islamic courts (Kholussy, 2010). This was in large part due to some of the Western-oriented reforms of the Egyptian judiciary that took place just before British occupation in 1882. Much like the parallel educational systems that emerged in the 1830s these reforms introduce a mixed system based on both secular and religious legal principles. While these shifts helped pave the way for more state control of the courts, issues concerning family law and the status of the Islamic courts in general remained mostly independent of the state until after the 1952 dissolution of the British-backed post-colonial monarchy.

In contemporary development discourse on Egypt, marriage and its relevance to education is often understood against the backdrop of local customs, tradition, and/or culture, a trend that seems to be on the rise since the start of the 2011 Egyptian revolution. The perception of gender relations in Egypt as operating mostly within a rigid cultural domain uncritically represents Egyptian women as victims of their own customs, possessing little to no transformative agency to affect their personal plight. These narrow explanations also fail to acknowledge the rich public debate on marriage and education occurring over the last century, structural realities, and personal circumstances that also affect the lives of girls and women (Singerman, 1995). While these contests over education, marriage, and national identity are ever evolving, this analysis will focus on the historical moments when the debate appears most intense, often around times of significant shifts in the demographic, political, or economic landscape. As a result, this section will examine the ways in which these public debates came to shape the discourse around the sorts of the lives women ought to be leading then and now.

In the decades leading up to the 1919 anti-colonial revolt, the Egyptian social landscape as it related to education began to shift. The terrain of formal schooling was complex and varied. Members of the growing urban elite were afforded opportunities to travel and study in Europe, while others were granted limited access to vocational schooling. Those who left the country were expected to return to Egypt to serve the State (Russell, 2004). As pressure mounted from the local ranks of the military and other disenfranchised groups to end the formal discrimination against indigenous Egyptian army officers, concessions were made in the form of increased educational access for

mostly men of certain privileged social classes. The previously described parallel educational system (state sponsored and religious) was placed under considerable strain with the rise of European missionary schools. As tensions regarding British rule of the country began to rise, women and men alike from many sectors of society staged demonstrations and acts of civil disobedience. The public role of women during this period led many politicians, lawmakers and religious figures to examine the role of women in new political arrangements (Kholoussy, 2010). Debates surrounding education for women saw schooling as a means for expanding women's public role in society. For Egyptian nationalists, education for women could serve to reinforce their role in mothering the nation. Kholoussy (2010) writes "...nationalist writers sought to carve out a place for educated motherhood that would simultaneously elevate women's position in the nation but contradictorily keep them wedded to the domestic sphere of the family without disturbing male privilege" (p. 122). For others it meant greater competition between secular and religious schooling. In all cases there was great fear over the future of marriage and the new post-colonial Egyptian family. This was largely the case since marriage was understood to serve both as the foundation for a new Egyptian society and for new Muslim household (Russell, 2004).

The excitement surrounding the new post-colonial state was short lived. The end of colonialism throughout the MENA region and with the subsequent revival of Egyptian nationalism coupled with the rise of Arab nationalism a new state was born with the Free Officers revolt of 1952. During this transitional period the role of education and marriage for women was a concern of the new military rulers. Like preceding governments they

impressed upon the *sha'b* (the people or masses) the need for strong families where mothers instill noble virtues associated with building a strong Egypt. Debates surrounding education for women centered on the ability schooling has to expand and constrict the extent and sort of public life women can lead.

The 1952 revolution also meant state control now extended to include the court systems and the religious establishment. Issues concerning marriage and divorce were made far more complicated as they became the exclusive domain of the state (Singerman, 1995). While there were many attempts to reform the marriage contract to grant women additional legal protections, all were rejected on either legislative or religious grounds. It was not until 2000 when an amendment to the Personal Status Law (PSL) challenged an existing law that afforded women the right to divorce only in cases where the courts found husbands at fault. Women's advocacy organizations along with religious groups successfully argued that the existing law violated Islamic legal principles and promoted gender inequality. Consequently, the main opponents of this draft law were members of the now outlawed National Democratic Party and not members of any conservative religious groups (Zaki, 2010). However, during the 1990s Al-Azhar opposed drafting a new marriage contract that (in addition to giving women the right to divorce) would give women the right to seek education, employment, or continue education (in the event it is interrupted) among other rights. Egypt's leading center for Islamic jurisprudence failed to endorse this reform (to take before the courts) because many of its scholars believed that a marriage contract with many stipulations would ultimately deter young people from marriage. Religious leaders noted Egypt's declining economy and growing popularity of

Western notions of family as the main reasons for their opposition (Zaki, 2010). This led to abandoning efforts for reforming the Egyptian marriage contract from the lesser goal of gaining gender equality in the divorce laws. For more than one hundred years through the British occupation, Free Officers Revolution, and the contests of over the family law reforms of the 1990s, education and marriage have played a significant role in the of public debates surrounding national identity. The social and political developments of the last two years represent the next chapter in this public debate regarding the lives women ought to lead, and the role education plays in contests around national identity formation.

### **Promises of gender equality in revolutionary times**

With the ever-changing political landscape of Egypt and the reemergence of public debate around marriage and girls' education, it is clear these developments will continue to influence policy discourse surrounding girls' education. This new period serves as more than just a convenient time stamp for future political and social developments. The revolution must be acknowledged and taken up by this study, since it serves to inform the social context. From the first revolutionary parliamentary elections to the most recent ouster of Mohamed Morsi and subsequent election of General Abdel-Fatah El-Sisi as president, the events since January 25, 2011 serve to define the social and political fluidity that have become typical of the last two and a half years in Egypt.

Issues related to women and gender (with particular reference gendered roles and nation building) has been one of the rallying points of the revolution, and has been met with excitement, skepticism, indifference, and even opposition by the public and Egypt's social, political, and religious institutional structures. In describing the eighteen days of

protest that led to the ouster of Hosni Mubarak, Sholkamy (2012) draws on Turner's (1967) contributions regarding liminal periods. She states that the perception of endless possibilities during this period was demonstrated in the outstanding cooperation of previously competing civil and social actors for the benefit of women and other marginalized populations. This period also illuminated some of the challenges Egyptian feminist activists have faced in dealing with attempts by the national government to appropriate their causes in the name of 'stability' and 'order'. As indicated previously, the liminal period appears to provide the promise of innumerable opportunities even though it remains captive to social and political constraints that exist in society at large. However, the continued contention over issues related to gender equality at a time when the rules of social and political engagement are constantly shifting may mean possibilities become a little more possible, and much more complex (Sholkamy, 2012).

The relationship between the Islamist political front (behind the leadership of the FJP) and the National Council for Women (NCW) over the last year is one example where the tension around issues related to the competing conceptions of gender equality since the start of the revolution can be seen clearly. The NCW is a government institution that was founded in 2000 in response to the international development movement promoting gender equality of the mid-1990s, specifically through the policy recommendations forwarded by the United Nations led Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA). Through the efforts of former First Lady Suzanne Mubarak and some prominent Egyptian feminists, the NCW worked to raise awareness and develop programs to address the needs of Egyptian women. Since its creation, the NCW (unlike many

government institutions) has operated under the direct supervision of the Office of the President (Sholkamy, 2012). Further, as head of state, Hosni Mubarak made certain that the institution Suzanne Mubarak worked to create was able to operate with a great deal of freedom. For a little over ten years the NCW focused primarily on increasing educational opportunities and raising awareness about issues in reproductive health and female genital mutilation (FGM). The NCW was instrumental in the overturning of many legislative constraints that previously sanctioned gender based injustice, primarily in the areas of women's freedom of movement without the permission of male relatives, and the right to participate in public service in the highest ranks of the judiciary. However, the fact that the work was so closely associated with Suzanne Mubarak led many to believe that the efforts were aimed at enhancing Egypt's image abroad and not really motivated by a genuine interest in addressing the structural inequalities that plague Egyptian society (Sholkamy, 2012). Much has changed with the arrival of the Egyptian revolution, and up until the ouster of Mohamed Morsi, the NCW was mostly at odds with the office of the president and the remainder of his cabinet.

In early June of 2013, I observed a meeting where representatives of the NCW were negotiating the terms of a new partnership with the U.S. based NGO for whom I was working. What made this meeting different from others I had attended was that in expressing some of the challenges they had been facing in their work, one representative of the NCW accused the former Muslim Brotherhood led government for attempting to transform their institution with their conservative ideology, a phenomenon many in Egypt had been calling the "Brotherhoodization" or Ikhwanization (referring to the Ikhwan, the



Muslim Brotherhood) of government institutions. This perceived difference between conservative Islamist and liberal secularist outlook on issues related to gender equality lies at the heart of what was expressed by the NCW at this meeting, and more broadly, current political contests concerning the role of girls and women in public life. To their credit, in the past year the NCW had observed conservative Islamist members of parliament attempt to push for legislation lifting government bans on FGM and mandatory minimum age requirements for marriage (Al Ahram Online, 2013). In response, women's advocacy groups raised the concern that such action could negatively affect the prospects for increasing girls education and gender equality more generally. While these efforts were largely unsuccessful, for the NCW the mere idea that their ability to affect public policy regarding issues related to the health and welfare of Egyptian women could be compromised was problematic.

Interestingly, representatives from the NCW remarked they felt they had been spared by the FJP due to the negative press the Egypt government received for failing to address the rising problem of gender based harassment and violence. Continuing to place political pressure on the NCW to reform would have likely cast the Islamist political trend in an even more negative light relative to women's issues.

The FJP and the NCW hold very different positions regarding the role of women in society, but these differences had not been widely reported in the media given high priority placed on other issues (Sholkamy, 2012). However since the July, 3, 2013 ouster of Mohamed Morsi and the subsequent resignation of his cabinet level appointees, the NCW made its position much more public in its condemnation of the former Muslim

Brotherhood-led government. In her recent remarks to the media, the president of the NCW stated that the last year has been “the worst and most cruel for Egyptian women” since they (the Muslim Brotherhood) attempted to “marginalize and exclude women” from public life (Dakroury, 2013). These recent events demonstrate that competing conceptions of gender equality and the politicization of issues concerning the health and welfare of Egyptian girls and women will continue to play a role in policy discussions. It also demonstrates that the fight over who get to shape public policy is largely gendered in its outlook and orientation. Further, policy considerations aimed exclusively at women demonstrate another form of gendered regulation as an attempt to institutionalize ideologically based normative conceptions regarding the lives of girls and women. Given the dynamic nature of this context, these processes will likely remain fluid and contentious.

### **The Ishraq Program**

As mentioned previously, following the Millennium Declaration of 2000, Egyptian policy makers partnered with Unicef to develop the Girls’ Education Initiative Egypt (GEIE), a large-scale reform aimed at providing educational access to girls and women at various levels (UNICEF, 2007). While this effort proved successful in many ways, it was not designed to meet the needs of the out-of school population, or girls who were previously enrolled and had not returned to school. In 2001, the Population Council’s Cairo office unveiled a program targeting adolescent out-of-school girls from the poorest governorates in Egypt to address the areas not met by the national level reform. Due to social and institutional barriers, many girls in Egypt who leave school are

often unable to return (Population Council, 2007). The Ishraq (Enlightenment) program was designed to provide Egypt's most marginalized citizens with opportunities for a second chance by preparing participants to successfully complete school re-entry exams. Additionally, Ishraq's curriculum emphasized literacy and life skills with special attention to reproductive health, civic engagement, and access to organized sports. The program also engaged members within the community to ensure support and sustainability. These curricular dimensions were designed so that students who complete the 30-month long program would not only pass the school re-entry exam, but also go on to complete secondary and in some cases post-secondary school (Population Council, 2007). At the completion of the pilot phase, Ishraq expanded from four villages with 50 participants per village to more than 30 villages with over 5,000 participants. During this phase, numerous program evaluations were conducted including quasi-experimental pre and post-tests, surveys and questionnaires, and structured and focus group interviews with participants, their families, and community members (Selim et al., 2013).

In June 2013 the program formally came to a close with a negotiated handover to the Egyptian Ministry of Youth (MoY) and the Department of Adult Education (DAE). Around this time I had the opportunity to attend the Ishraq Dissemination Conference while working with the Population Council in Cairo, which brought together many stakeholders from private, public, and non-profit sectors to celebrate the program's successes, and discuss ongoing challenges. One of the most pressing issues raised during this highly publicized event was the lack of follow up with former participants. After numerous conversations with Population Council program staff, I came to the conclusion

that a study designed in some respect to examine this issue is critically important. This information is vital, and without further study, the extent to which the program has been successful in meeting its stated objectives cannot be evaluated.

Brought on largely by the discourse surrounding educational access and the UNGEI, the Ishraq program illustrates the ways in which education policy shapes practices, and in turn has the potential to shape the lives of individuals and their families at the most local levels. With many of the former participants now well into adulthood, this study broadly situates their experiences with marriage and education against the backdrop of the revolutionary climate.

### **Significance of the study**

There are some studies that examine the intersection of marriage and education for girls and women in Egypt (Population Council, 2010). There are also studies that examine the affect transnational development discourse and national development strategies have on local communities (Levinson & Sutton, 2001). As a result, this study is posed to make an original contribution to the literature on how development agendas and gender equity contests inform and are formed by revolutionary politics.

This study also contributes to emergent methodological considerations in the field of international development education. The use of the vertical case study method furthers the claim that power and policy are inextricably linked and can be critically observed at all levels of policy design, implementation, and localization (Vavrus & Bartlett, 2009). Few scholars (Megahed & Lack, 2011, Adely, 2012) have examined the effect policy recommendations have on national and local governments of the MENA

region, the development community, and most importantly members of local communities who are often the targets of these strategies.

With the 2015 deadline of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) upon us, this research also comes at a time of transition for the international development community. In preparation for this deadline, the United Nations, national governments, and the international development community began to assess the past 15 years and to push for renewed commitments. Lastly, with a research focus that directly and indirectly examines the MDGs concerning universal primary education and gender equality and empowering women, this study's critical consideration of transnational development discourse and national development strategies is extremely timely and has far-reaching policy implications. Taken together, this study advances understandings of the effect transnational development discourse and revolutionary politics have on marriage and girls' education in Egypt, and to inform key debates in policy, activist, and scholarly audiences.

### **Limitations of the study**

The limitations of this study and the strategies I plan to employ for addressing them will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Three. Nonetheless, it is important at this point to identify some of the challenges I faced as I preparing to conduct this research.

One of the most obvious and significant limitations of this study is that it took place at a time when Egypt is experiencing an extremely high level of political and social fluidity. These revolutionary circumstances create uncertain conditions where research

contexts are subject to change, sometimes without warning. Given the high incidences of turnover of those holding political office, it was important for me to work closely with my contacts in the NGO community with active partners in national and local government to ensure I had continued access to participants and the research context. This dynamic set of circumstances also presented a tremendous opportunity for making a significant contribution to the ways in which the effects of national and transnational development priorities affect the ways in which education policy in Egypt is understood.

Additionally, this study would not be appropriately poststructural in its theoretical orientation without self-examination of my role in the production of new knowledge on this topic. As a first generation (born in the United States) Egyptian-American who is male, I am well aware that the essential qualities of the questions I pose as a researcher concerning this subject are shaped by my sociocultural experience. This transnational position also provides a unique lens from which the intersection of marriage and girls education can be examined. Further, as a male proposing a research study in Egypt, I was aware that at times my accessing female participants may be problematic as some public and private social spaces are reserved for girls and women. This was a more significant concern for collecting data for the rural components of the study. In addressing this challenge I relied heavily on the support of local contacts to introduce me to participants. I also worked closely with a female graduate student who during the summer of 2013 had recently completed her master's degree in comparative education. Mona<sup>7</sup> served as my research assistant for some of the visits I made to the rural field sites. Her assistance

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<sup>7</sup> All names of persons and some names of places in this study have been changed to protect the privacy of respondents.

before, during, and after the interviews I conducted with the former Ishraq participants proved invaluable. I explore my research positionality in greater detail in Chapter Three.

### **Summary of the rest of the dissertation**

The following chapter discusses the literature that frames the dominant discourse surrounding the topic of marriage and girls' education in Egypt. The literature explored in this chapter, along with the conceptual frameworks discussed in the preceding one, serve to guide this research by shaping the research design and methodological considerations discussed in Chapter Three.

### **Analysis chapters (4-6)**

In Chapter Four I argue that there are disjunctures in what constitutes “success” between study participants. In reference to the success of the Ishraq program, and with regard to participants' understanding of their success as beneficiaries, I suggest there is a link between ideas of what constitutes success and individual's understandings of the relationship between marriage and education for girls and women in rural Upper Egypt. Participants often conflated their views of the Ishraq program with their personal viewpoints on marriage. In other instances, Ishraq's successes as an intervention are understood by the extent to which participants shift their thinking about marriage during and after participating in the program. This chapter works to describe — using a number of methodological tools — the varying notions of success as they shape and are shaped by individuals' understandings of marriage and education. Interventions have many involved parties all having the potential to experience a given program differently. However, in examining power differentials between stakeholders that render some

versions of success more valuable than others, this chapter brings to the fore new ways of thinking about past, current, and future social relations in Egypt.

Chapter Five builds on the previous chapter as I forward the argument, some versions of “success” matter more than others and for many different reasons. In this chapter I suggest, dimensions of structural power create hierarchal groupings where the idea of what matters most to the participants in this study reveals the Egyptian state is still largely a projection of Cairene authority where the periphery is understood as spatially different and temporally distant. Egypt’s Cairo-centric national development priorities have historically produced initiatives aimed at eradicating behaviors deemed ‘backwards’ or ‘pre-modern’ at the provincial levels. In this same vein it appears the Ishraq program is exacerbating the divide that exists in these communities between rural and urban peoples. The new rural-urban dualism at the provincial level that has emerged during this most recent period situates the NGOs as not only responsible for delivering “development” services previously the charge of the national government, but more importantly the force that drives Cairo’s cultural war on rural Upper Egypt as a whole. “Culture” remains the primary unit of analysis, and affecting it through interventions like Ishraq remains a preoccupation of the development community.

In Chapter Six I argue that in the last 18 months there has been an emergence of an “education can wait” discourse as families across rural Upper Egypt make critical choices about education for their girls’ through a lens safety and security and not in cultural opposition to empowerment and economic independence. In this chapter I suggest for some residents of rural Upper Egypt their understandings and perceptions of



the security situation in the country has lead to an unfavorable view of girls and young women traveling to neighboring communities to study. Drawing on the analyses of the previous chapter —the emerging dualism between provincial-urban and rural — this chapter forwards that this shift has the potential to further marginalize rural communities.

The developments taken up in Chapters Four and Five come to a head during this critical moment in a context that has seen many shifts in the social and political landscape since the start of the Egyptian revolution four years ago, and even more so over since July 2013. These events have produced a very unique set of circumstances where decisions regarding marriage and education for girls and women can no longer be reduced to social, economic, or even political factors. This chapter also draws on the works of scholars in the areas of securitization to bring attention to how the rhetoric of securitization is understood to affect the lives of women in Egypt during this current moment in the revolution. I conclude this chapter by challenging the prevailing securitization in education literature through an illustration of the ways in which the lives of those living in rural areas across Upper Egypt are also compromised by the rise of the human-security state. I argue the lens of securitization is tremendously helpful for examining shifts in international development discourses related to girls' education as they produce policies that affect and are affected by individuals and organizations like those I observed.

I conclude this dissertation in Chapter Seven by revisiting these findings and examining their implications for scholarship in comparative education and international development studies. In this chapter I also explore how this dissertation research lead me

to develop an alternative to the prevailing “education in emergencies” literature in order to examine developments to education during the revolutionary moments. After the start of the January Revolution many schools and universities across Egypt were temporarily closed. During this time many scholars, practitioners, and policy makers argued that education was one way or another under attack, and that schools were going to become a battleground for political and religious factions vying for greater influence. I argue in this closing chapter that the post-revolutionary period has seen tremendously intense social and political contestation around education policy and curricular reform. However, the “education in emergencies” and “education in conflict” literatures are largely inadequate for examining the complex sociopolitical and historical dimensions of power that shape contests regarding education policy and girls education.

## Chapter Two: Literature review

### Introduction

The arguments in the literature concerning why promoting girls' education should be a national development priority in the MENA region are varied and contentious (Herrera & Torres, 2006). This review of the literature examines the ways in which some of the leading development approaches conceptually frame notions of 'modern' womanhood through the promotion of education for girls and women. These conceptualizations are demonstrated in the underlying assumptions of each approach that guide research and promote specific development interventions. While many scholars have addressed this topic, less has been written about the MENA region. Moreover, the literature on gender and development in the MENA region has not engaged with Egypt during an on-going revolution where the political landscape is extremely fluid. The three prevailing logics for promoting girls' education included discussed here are the *human capital*, *human capabilities*, and *critical feminist* approaches. Employing a poststructural analytical frame, each of these leading rationales represents a different discursive formation where specific knowledge claims concerning girls' education are foregrounded leaving others out of focus. Nonetheless, each has come to inform girls' education policy differently thus warranting their examination. Lastly, this review will also bring forward specific gaps in the literature and highlight areas where this study can contribute to the available knowledge on gender, development, and education in the MENA region, specifically in Egypt.

## Human capital

Human capital investment has been associated with classical liberal economic theory since the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, but it was not until the 1960s it came to influence education policy (Ward, 2012). Informed largely by T. W. Schultz's (1963) work on the economics of education, and Gary Becker's (1964) work regarding rates of return on investment from schooling, human capital theory ushered in a new way of thinking about the relationship between education and economic growth. This encouraged scholars to consider the impact of schooling on a country's economic growth, as well as its health and welfare (Schultz, 1963). Human capital perspectives are conceptually situated in a larger *functionalist* theory of *modernization*, where men and women work to carry their societies from the 'traditional' to the 'modern' by increasing their productivity in a market based economy (Moser, 1993). In the context of the United States, Becker (1964) argues women's 'advancement' is largely due to their increased attachment to the labor force, and increases in the labor force are tied to skill development through schooling.

By the early 1970s it became clear women could play a role in these new economic arrangements. Emerging from the concern new 'modern' economic arrangements could marginalize women, Boserup (1970) argued nations in the 'developing world' needed to value women's contributions to the economy as 'traditional' roles in agriculture changed. While her major focus was on women's impact on agriculture and farming in the Global South, she identifies education as the primary tool that promotes economic development and more importantly, 'modernization'. Regarding the education and training of women, she argued economic contributions of

women in the modern economy are poor in ‘primitive societies’ because women are not afforded the same opportunities for schooling as their male counterparts. Further, like many proponents of human capital theory, Boserup (1970) makes the connection between a nation’s investment in growing women’s human capital and the potential for increased economic growth. She argues challenging ‘traditional’ gender roles is important as they limit the economic growth of women and negatively impact society as a whole (Boserup, 1970).

These ideas about human capital gave way to what came to be known as the ‘women in development’ movement (WID). WID critics of development projects began to argue economic empowerment for women was being insufficiently addressed (Colclough, Al-Samarrai, Rose, & Tembon, 2003). In order to address these disparities, supporters of WID suggest women must be afforded the opportunity by national governments and the development community at large to develop the skills and knowledge necessary to serve emerging modern economies. Further, if women are excluded from the labor force, societies effectively squander the opportunity to increase economic productivity (Becker, 1964). Increased access to schooling for girls ultimately serves to facilitate the transmission of knowledge and skills required in order maximize their economic potential. Recent scholarship from human capital perspectives suggests policies targeting girls’ education should be informed by research identifying impediments to educational access and determinants of educational quality in order to maximize economic potential of women (Schultz, 1993, Dancer & Rammohan, 2007, & Assaad et al., 2010).

Schultz (1993) illustrates this as he argues human capital investments in women's schooling are necessary for increased participation in the labor market and the growth of modern economics. In exploring this issue from a global perspective, he compared rates of investment in girls' schooling from all regions of the world using years of school enrollment as the single measure of a country's human capital investment. The assumption being, investment in providing access to schooling leads to greater opportunity for financial return. To compare rates of investment in schooling, the *1984 UNESCO Statistical Yearbook* was used. The *UNESCO Statistical Yearbook* contains data on education, literacy, science and technology, culture and communication. This data set contains a variety of statistics that relate to years of school enrollment for men and women from all world regions from 1950-1984. The indicators of regional and national investment in this study were expected years of enrollment, years of schooling completed, annual growth rates associated with school enrollment, and public expenditure on education (Schultz, 1993).

One of the key findings was a 'relationship' between average years of schooling for women and the rate of economic growth in a country or region. He found in higher income countries, men and women were receiving nearly the same amount of schooling, while the data suggests there is little gender parity in years of schooling in low and middle-income countries. Additionally, countries making the greatest gains towards gender parity were also experiencing more rapid economic growth, namely in Latin America and East Asia. This finding suggests countries with a lower comparative investment and slower economic development must simply increase investment and

provide greater educational access to women and girls to stimulate economic growth. He explains these findings by suggesting 'traditional' conceptions of women's place in society (doing domestic work) negatively impacts school enrollment and completion in countries experiencing relatively lower economic growth, namely South and West Asia and Africa (Schultz, 1993).

Schultz (1993) also included an examination of literature about the impact girls' education has on individual health, income, and social externalities. Through his literature review, he argues there are residual social impacts associated with investment in the human capital of girls and women. This study notes a decline in fertility among educated women using the data from the 1975 United Nations World Fertility Surveys. Women who are earning more also stand to lose more income if they decide to have more children. Much of the literature referenced in this study also discusses how mothers with more schooling tend to have children who stay in school longer. Schultz (1993) contends as complex as they are, the social benefits associated with investing in girls' education outweigh any potential risks to the individual, family, and society. The research suggests there is a link between increased schooling and economic growth, and between economic growth and increased health outcomes. However, the link between increased investment in girls schooling and health related outcomes requires further study (Schultz, 1993).

While this study raises some important questions regarding the presumed relationship between schooling, economic growth, and health related outcomes for women and girls, it is limited by the dataset used and the interpretation of the findings. In examining years of schooling, the dataset spanned from 1950-1984, leaving out nearly a

decade of data at the time of publication. It is unknown how this impacts the study given the rapid economic growth many countries have experienced, namely India, China, and among the Arab Gulf states. Further, the dataset excluded many low-income countries, providing an incomplete picture. These issues limit the researchers ability to make substantive comparisons between countries, and constrain the conclusions that are drawn from them.

Beyond the dataset, the conclusions and implications of the study are also problematic. In explaining his findings, Schultz (1993) argues gender disparities in health and levels of education in Africa and South and West Asia should be resolved through investment in women's human capital. Further, the author concludes parents of school children and their 'traditional' perceptions of the social role of women ultimately stand in the way of public policy efforts aimed at addressing gender disparities. While this may be a widely held assumption by some, parents' perceptions of their children's education are not measured in this study. Presenting this assumption as an explanation for why some nations 'progress' while other do not, fails to address the complex realities that affect investment in girls' education (Kabeer, 1994). By focusing this research primarily on identifying 'impediments to progress,' Schultz (1993) ultimately employs human capital investment as an explanation/solution against all others. This discursive formation frames economic growth as the primary logic for addressing gender disparities in schooling. Far reaching explanations such as these also fail to address the potential development strategies have for creating gendered opportunities for women and girls in the labor market. An example of this phenomenon are the neoliberal economic reforms of the



1980s where employment opportunities for women were created but only in certain industries, simultaneously growing and constraining women's access to the labor market (El-Mahdi & Marfleet, 2009).

Dancer and Rammohan (2007) similarly raise the issue of human capital investment and girl's schooling, but more specifically within an Egyptian context. They ground their study in the assumption that investment in the human capital of women through increases in years of schooling can lead to economic growth. This research attempts to explain why some children stay in school, and others drop out or never attend. Using data from the nationally representative Egypt Integrated Household Survey (EIHS), the researchers examined school attendance. Of the more than 14,000 individuals included in the EIHS data set, 3,064 children ages 6-15 make up the final sample used in this study. This sample was analyzed using a multinomial logistic regression. In addition to gender and residence, children's school attendance is dependent on their parents' level of schooling. They noted when parents reported having less than 5 years of education, 20% of the children reported dropping out of school. This study also found rural residence had a significant negative probability. The Upper Egypt sample demonstrated its children had a 68% lower chance of being currently enrolled. While the relative advantage in school attendance for boys is also made clear across all contexts, rural girls are the least likely to persist in school. Rural boys were found over two times more likely than their female counterparts to have some school rather than no school (Dancer & Rammohan, 2007).

This study highlights the need to address the affect gender and residence has on education in Egypt. For more than five years this study has helped shape public policy discourse in Egypt as it speaks to the material aims of the EFA movement in addressing educational disparities relative to gender and geography. However influential, this study does not address the probable impact deeply imbedded patriarchal structures may have on school attendance for girls. Many Egyptian girls report gender-based harassment and violence along with marginalization in the home and in the school community as reason for never attending or dropping out of school. Still, others suggest the issue is more complicated as school attendance lies at the intersection of opportunity costs, family wishes, and individual needs or circumstances. This complexity is unfounded in this research, and despite renewed efforts to address the underlying issues related to educational access and quality, obstacles still remain (Herrera & Torres, 2006).

Like the preceding research, Assaad et al. (2010) examined girls' education and domestic work grounded in a human capital framework. The researchers operate from the position all children should have the opportunity to access education in order to grow their human capital. In doing so there are increased economic opportunities and decreased fertility rates. The assumption underlying this research is that in order for girls and women to reach to reach their 'full potential' they need to be afforded the opportunity to utilize their human capital to earn in the labor market instead of working in the home. By examining the effect of domestic work on school attendance for girls, this research builds on Dancer and Rammohan's (2007) attempt to explore determinants of schooling more broadly. This study also aims to add to the existing bodies of literature

on child labor in economics, and on schooling in development. They argue traditional studies on child labor do not account for domestic work when examining potential determinants of schooling. The authors suggest since less than 2% of Egyptian girls aged 6-14 actually work outside of the home, encouraging the national government to restrict child labor will have little to no effect on their school attendance (Assaad et al., 2010).

The dataset used in this study came from a nationally representative household survey administered in 1998 through collaboration between an external agency and an Egyptian government ministry. The initial sample of the Egypt Labor Market Survey (ELMS) contains completed questionnaires from nearly 24,000 individuals. 2,458 were girls between the ages of 6 and 14. The authors analyzed the data from the ELMS using a modified bivariate probit model. In examining the effect of domestic work on school attendance, this study found that a 10% increase in the probability of work resulted in a 6% decrease in the probability of school attendance. Further, based on simulation results, this study predicts a negative correlation between having a low-income and school attendance as well as when one or both parents are uneducated or absent. Lastly, they conclude any interventions motivated by this study should look to alleviate the harsh realities of domestic work; specifically tasks that are the most time consuming and labor intensive. Beyond providing girls with more opportunities to attend school, this study suggests investing in infrastructure projects (piped water, better sewage systems, and organized trash removal), and addressing the educational quality of the public school system in Egypt (Assaad et al., 2010).

Assaad et al. (2010) expand significantly on the prevailing literature concerning the issue of educational access for girls in Egypt. This study is one of the few concerning Egypt grounded in a human capital framework that suggests addressing the complexity that should be associated with educational quality. It also furthers the claim there are numerous determinants of school attendance. The main limitations are the two suggested action items (infrastructure and quality) are not measured in this analysis, and therefore their relationship to schooling remains unclear. Even with this, the study is exceptional as it concerns a more comprehensive approach to girls' education than previously mentioned research.

The structural constraints presented in this study do raise some concerns regarding the authority by which econometric-based analyses and their predictive models are received within the Egyptian public policy circles. While there is an emerging literature (explored below) that highlights some of these structural issues from rights-based and critically oriented standpoints, they are not given the same attention due largely to their qualitative and presumably localized focus. I found this to be the case in my own experiences working within various NGO networks in Egypt where much of the qualitative evaluation of development interventions was often reduced to utilizing focus groups for community needs assessments or using informal interviewing for building trust with local stakeholders. It is far too often not until econometric-based analyses unwitting recognition of structural inequality where Egyptian policy makers tend to take notice of problematic social trends.

The human capital perspective frames girls' education as an opportunity for nations to maximize effectiveness and increase productivity. Without the appropriate skills to contribute to the modern economy, women can be excluded and economic development stunted. Education plays the role of preparing girls' for service to the economy. Proponents of this approach suggest investment in girls' education can address unequal wage distributions and income inequalities (Becker, 1993). Further, Schultz (1963) argues the reason income inequality prevails is largely a result of differences in human capital investment and not unequal social or political structures. While this logic continues to influence policy makers and the development community at large, alternative perspectives that take into account social and political impediments to educational access and quality argue the need to advocate for different rationales for promoting girls' education.

### **Human capabilities**

Claiming its roots in the early 1980s and inspired by the work of Amartya Sen, the capabilities approach aims to fundamentally change the development landscape by focusing development work on personal well-being (Walker & Unterhalter, 2007). Mainly a response to the human capital perspective, proponents of the capabilities approach argue against economic growth as the single measure of human development, citing it as insufficient (Nussbaum, 2011). While scholars associated with this approach draw from a wide array of disciplines and theoretical approaches, at its core, the capabilities approach aims to provide a more nuanced understanding of the social and political complexities affecting girls' education. Scholars from the capabilities approach

argue contextual factors in society can limit or expand capabilities for girls' education (Nussbaum & Sen, 1993). Further, the human capital approach focuses primarily on the collective benefit of girls' education, while proponents of the capabilities approach argue education policy should emphasize the well being of individuals while taking into account individual differences. These scholars also view girls' education as a basic capability among many, which are both instrumentally and intrinsically valuable. Education is seen as a way to promote freedom and agency so girls can participate in society more fully (Walker & Unterhalter, 2007). This approach is grounded in a human rights based frameworks from which social arrangements concerning women and girls and their personal well-being and freedom should be examined and evaluated.

Research highlighting the complexity of well-being can help inform policy makers whose singular focus may be to promote development initiatives that only address economic dimensions (Sen, 1989). Additionally, many scholars who identify with this approach take on the issue of personal freedom as an alternative to the dominant thinking associated with economic development. Sen (1993) argues that the 'freedom' to lead a particular sort life is at the heart of every individual's set of basic capabilities. Here he is referring to individual freedom, as this is separate from the lives individuals lead in relation to others in their family and/or members of their own community. Sen (1993) suggests individual freedoms are largely contingent on a person's character and social arrangements in a particular context. In characterizing human capability as freedom, the author contends that while this notion can be indistinct, operationalizing it for the purposes of evaluation captures the complexity of a range of possibilities more closely

aligned with individual well being and not necessarily associated with economic development. Lastly, Sen (1993) believes individual freedoms can be evaluated by measuring the quantity and quality of choices individuals' are able to make regarding the sorts of life they are able to live. This measurement of individual freedoms constitutes a core value of the capabilities approach. While not all scholars who identify themselves with this approach would agree with Sen's (1993) assessment of individual freedoms, the operationalizing of 'human values' for evaluation and assessment are a mainstay of this approach.

A main challenge to Sen's (1993) work is the distinction he makes between 'freedom' and 'individual freedom'. This is not to suggest that grounding a development approach in the idea of a human universal like freedom is not problematic. This issue will be taken up in greater detail later in this section. Nonetheless, it seems paradoxical to suggest that while individual freedom is contingent on personal qualities and social arrangements, measuring individual freedoms should not include the freedom one has to do things for others or the freedom individuals may have relative to others in their social context. Sen (1993) acknowledges that freedom is also constituted in the personal objectives individuals may have not directly related to their own life. However, he argues that an enhanced 'well being' that is achieved through doing things for others should not necessarily count towards the individual freedom one has to live the life they choose. In the context of this proposed study an insistence on separating individual freedoms from other sorts of freedom is at the least problematic. In her work concerning families from low socioeconomic sectors of Cairo, Hoodfar (1997) argues that while poor economic

conditions are not generally perceived as the most liberating set of circumstances, the women included in her study discussed the happiness one can experience through the relationship with others one keeps. The freedom an individual has to do something for others in the face of social and economic constraint is what many participants in Hoodfar's (1997) study, including the researcher, described as survival. Using Sen's (1993) characterization of partial freedoms, the women in Hoodfar's (1997) study by relying on one another for socioeconomic support are able to enhance their quality of life.

Beyond the issue of freedom, the capabilities approach emphasizing the importance of contextual factors in education, Walker and Unterhalter (2007) argue that it is not sufficient for girls to be provided access to schooling without considering issues of quality. If girls experience harassment and/or violence associated with their educational experience, over time they may decide to pursue other means to personal development. In addition to its usability in program evaluation and assessment, the capabilities approach is espoused to be a useful framework for examining the choices women and girls can make given their social context (Nussbaum, 2011). However, it is important to note not all scholars situated in this approach agree that the researcher should select the most important capabilities to examine or encourage. Nussbaum (2000) argues there are ten central universal human capabilities, while Sen (2004) encourages communities to negotiate in a democratic manner those capabilities that best reflect their needs and interests. This division helpfully illustrates how some scholars of the capabilities approach share more similarities with those from the critical paradigm (Walker, 2007). The flexibility advocated by Sen (2004) demonstrates what many



perceive as the adaptability of a capabilities framework. Nonetheless, one of the more significant challenges to its adaptability to the research context in this study lies in its insistence on employing a framework grounded in notions of ‘human universality’ and ‘democratic values’. This examination of the capabilities approach ultimately sets out to demonstrate that while this framework challenges singularly focused development logics, it may not be relevant to the politically fluid landscape of revolutionary Egypt. For instance, the dynamic security situation of the last four years has affected men and women as well as those living in rural and urban contexts differently. There are frameworks beyond the capabilities approach —namely critical and poststructural approaches to the securitization of education — that examine the affects of these shifts on individuals as well as within families, communities, and at the national and transnational levels.

Walker (2007) utilizes the capabilities approach to assess the quality of efforts to bring gender equality to South African schools. This work examines the potential for utilizing the approach for program evaluation and assessment. The researcher developed a strategy for assessing gender equality by creating a list of selected capabilities then grounding them in a South African context (Walker, 2007). The selected basic capabilities are independent and critical thought, knowledge development, bodily integrity (health and safety), and respect for self and others. It is important for assessments situated in the capabilities approach to foreground the experiences and values of the students. Interviews were conducted over the course of one month with 40 female high-school students from four different Cape Town schools to explore which

capabilities they value relative to the lives they choose. Although the rates of passing the matriculation exam were only 3.5% higher for boys than girls, the author argues statistics such as these fail to resolve issues like safety and freedom from harassment raised by schoolgirls included in this study and presumably throughout the country. The participants highlighted freedom, independence, safety, and economic opportunity as the most essential elements that should be included in schooling. Many noted they did not feel safe when traveling to and from school, while others believe school provides girls and women with opportunities not afforded to previous generations of women (Walker, 2007).

Through interviews, Walker (2007) created a supplemental list of capabilities that formed the basis for assessing gender equality in the four schools. This list includes: autonomy (freedom to have choices), knowledge (intrinsic and instrumental), social relations (capability to have healthy relationships among peers and teachers), respect for self and others, aspiration, voice (freedom from being silenced), bodily integrity (health and safety), and emotional integrity (freedom from harassment). Walker (2007) suggests with curricular and pedagogic integration, securing these capabilities will afford schoolgirls the opportunity to make their own choices. Further, for school administrators and teachers to be partners in expanding these basic capabilities they must reasonably address the differentiating power they hold over their students (Walker, 2007). While this is an illustrative example of the potential for utilizing the capabilities approach, its application to the context of this dissertation research presents fundamentally different challenges. The act of working with a group of young Egyptian women today and asking

them to identify basic capabilities for a researcher to assess is problematic. The recent ouster of the elected president Mohamed Morsi demonstrates that since the start of Egypt's 2011 January Revolution, everything from state institutions and basic constitutional rights to local conceptions regarding the role women ought to play in public life are negotiable and subject to change.

In relation to the role that power and politics play in shaping the lives of women, the capabilities approach shares some ontological assumptions with critical feminist theory. This serves as the conceptual link between the two approaches generally and in the context of this dissertation research. In their study regarding what children value about their education in rural northern Bangladesh, DeJaeghere and Lee (2011) utilize an analytical lens grounded in the capabilities approach and informed by critical feminist perspectives. As a result, their work examines the gendered social structures that cause marginalization in these schools and in surrounding communities using the language of a human capabilities conceptual framework.

Since 1990, the government of Bangladesh has worked to increase the number of children enrolled in school, especially girls. In 2005 the government reported average primary school net enrollment rates at 87 percent for boys and 91 percent for girls. While these statistics suggest government efforts were largely successful, the incidence of school dropout also increased during the same period. Between 2002 and 2006, the dropout rate increased from 33 percent to 52 percent. While government efforts to increase access to basic education are important, there remain marginalizing social structures that negatively impact student retention and students' experiences. The authors

explore their research question theoretically and conceptually by examining the literature, and practically through examining a recent study on marginalization and empowerment (DeJaeghere & Lee, 2011).

DeJaeghere and Lee (2011) draw on a longitudinal Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere (CARE) study that looks at eight countries including Bangladesh. Their study specifically looked at data from a situational analysis of marginalized communities in rural Bangladesh from the CARE study. The CARE study was conducted in seven communities in northern Bangladesh with the highest reported percentages of children ages 15-19 out of school. The data included 78 school children (40 male and 39 female) that were in primary school at the time, and included some who also dropped out of school during the year prior to their participation in the study. The authors' analysis also drew upon interviews conducted with 44 mothers and fathers, 9 teachers, and 11 community elders. The interviews included open and closed ended questions related to the material, physical, and social conditions the participants' experience on a daily basis. Further, focus groups were conducted with the school children and separately for mothers and fathers to explore their experiences with school. The researchers then utilized a capabilities approach and critical feminist perspective to group the participant responses in accordance with how they relate to issues such as educational well being and gendered conceptions of power. Using a clustered analysis, the authors grouped responses into two categories, participants who reflected positively when asked about their experiences with school and those who expressed negative feelings. The authors focused primarily on interview questions related to social structures, relationships, and agency. As a result,

many students included in the study expressed they enjoyed their experience at school. However, regarding safety, community and family support, and relevance of the education, a significant number of students expressed frustrations and dissatisfaction with their school experience. 31 percent of students felt unsafe (a larger percentage of girls than boys) and 26 percent felt unsupported by their community or family. Further, over 20 percent of boys felt their education was irrelevant compared to around 30 percent among girls. Most students expressed they were aware education, safety, and support were rights and not privileges. However, most children (a higher proportion of girls than boys) also felt they could do very little to change their circumstances (DeJaeghere and Lee, 2011).

This study demonstrates while efforts to increase enrollment can be successful; they cannot independently address gendered social structures that constrain and limit the capacity for well being among school children. By drawing on a strong theoretical foundation and clear practical applications, this research examines how education is inexorably linked to issues related to labor, equality, social justice, and human rights (DeJaeghere & Lee, 2011). Further, it encourages research in this field to study the impacts of contextual factors, institutional management, and curriculum and pedagogy related to girls and women. The flexibility of the capabilities approach is evidenced by its utilization across numerous contexts and how it informs literature from varied educational research paradigms (Walker & Unterhalter, 2007). Research in girls' education grounded in the capabilities approach is still in its nascent stages. Nonetheless, this perspective already fashions itself as the most comprehensive approach to

understanding the social and political dimensions informing development. Proponents of the capabilities approach continue to encourage research conducted in this field to value outcomes related to personal well being in their evaluations and assessments of educational programs. Conjoining education with wider social and political capabilities provides new opportunities for evaluation, assessment and expanding capabilities (Dejaeghere & Lee, 2011).

The capabilities approach emerged largely in response to the dominance of human capital oriented development logics. It has now become a widely popular alternative to the dominant modes of development discussed in this chapter. While the capabilities approach focuses primarily on the well-being of individuals, the critical feminist approach focuses exclusively on the structural and contextual constraints to women caused by patriarchy, illuminating the effect of discourse on understanding the intersection of marriage and girls education in revolutionary Egypt.

### **Critical Feminist**

In the late 1970s Marxist and neo-Marxist perspectives emerged in opposition to traditional development discourses. These perspectives argue capitalism generally, and the WID movement more specifically, contributes very little to examining the real roots of gender inequality, instead often furthering gender disparities (Moser, 1993).

Epistemological assumptions underlying these critical perspectives inform scholars of why research should be undertaken, distinguishing them from other research paradigms. Researchers taking a critical approach argue their work should examine power differentials in society while working to address them through action-oriented research

and scholarly social advocacy (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1998). These approaches generally consider social relations to be constrained by power differentials.

Traditional critical literature inspired by the work of Karl Marx and Fredrich Engels focuses on examining the inequalities that prevail in society with regard to accessing the means of production in the economy. Contemporary critical scholarship argues inequalities exist beyond the economic realm. As a result, their work examines the role of power inequalities with regard to gender, social class, race, and sexuality (Stromquist, 1998). This literature also identifies schools as a site where power and patriarchy must be challenged, and social transformation initiated. Critical feminist scholars argue promoting girls' education is a significant step in addressing gender inequalities imbedded in society that lead to the marginalization of women and girls (Zaalouk, 2004, Hererra, 2006, & Naguib, 2006). However, it is worth noting that these scholars along with Abu-Lughod (1998) are critical of feminist thinkers who conclude that in the MENA region patriarchy<sup>8</sup> is a matter of cultural permanence. Notwithstanding, the socializing power of schooling on children has long been studied by scholars in the critical fields. In the last two decades, research grounded in these approaches has examined structural inequalities in society and in some instances addressed them by initiating action-oriented projects (Kabeer, 1994). In this spirit, proponents of critical feminist approaches implicate schools as the primary agent in fostering social constructs that subordinate women and girls, thus requiring examination of the schools (Feinberg &

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<sup>8</sup> Grounded in postcolonial feminist understandings regarding structural constraints in society, patriarchy in this context is viewed as a dynamic structure and gender as a complex where power can be derived. This is to suggest, the researcher finds patriarchy in the Egyptian context as both a useful lens from where gender inequality can be examined and an oeuvre from which women and girls are understood as lacking agency and as a result are made less visible (Abu-Lughod, 1998).

Soltis, 2009). Until recently, research concerning school culture in the Middle East and North Africa was largely absent from the literature (Herrera & Torres, 2006).

Naguib (2006) studied the process of cultural production and reproduction in Egyptian public schools. The main purpose of this research was to further understand this process and investigate the strategies teachers and students utilize in resisting different forms of power and control. This challenges the traditional assumptions that knowledge production should be objective and it is appropriate for schools to socialize children to serve a functionalist end (Feinberg & Soltis, 1998). In order to address these issues, Naguib (2006) spent more than nine months in Alexandria, Egypt interviewing students and teachers from ten low-income single-sex primary schools. He also observed classrooms and at times participated in school gatherings.

Naguib's (2006) analysis of the school context describes the physical spaces of the schools to be largely substandard in quality. He finds the hierarchical nature of school administration to be ineffective and responsible for creating inequalities. This organizational structure leaves teachers powerless and fearing punishment for inciting conflict, which in turn leaves the school vulnerable to cover-ups. Through interviews and focus groups, students reported being beaten, insulted, and intimidated by their teachers as a method of controlling the learning environment. Female students reported routine verbal and psychological harassment by teachers and administrators, while male students reported more physical punishment. Lastly, teachers described increased student aggression, both violent and non-violent, towards teachers. Many male students responded to abuses by threatening teachers and administrators with physical harm, while



others hit their teachers. The female students argued the only way they could combat the harassment was to threaten to expose teachers to the community or neighborhood. This is explained as a response to classroom hegemony where students are now challenging 'normative' conceptions of classroom behavior (Naguib, 2006). The main limitation of this study is the researcher's concern with making generalizations about school behavior in Egypt. At times Naguib (2006) oversimplified observations in making the case for characterizing public education in Egypt, as in a state of crisis. These generalizations take away from what can be learned about the values students and teachers come to associate with school in this particular moment. Nonetheless, this research represents a significant attempt to fill a void in the literature regarding school culture in Egypt.

Beyond examining power and patriarchy in schools, critical feminist scholars argue schools are a site for social transformation and the physical environment must be considered. Many public schools in the global south suffer from poor infrastructure such as crumbling buildings, poor sanitation, and limited electricity (Herrera & Torres, 2006). Herrera (2006) examined the impact physical spaces have on teachers and the schoolgirls of a double-shift single-sex Egyptian primary school. Additionally, the study addresses how issues related to physical space can help produce certain normative gendered behaviors among teachers and students and reflect particular structural constraints to gender equity. As a proponent of action-oriented research, Herrera was an active participant in the renovation of the school she studied (Herrera, 2006).

Herrera would not begin the study unless teachers and students were involved in the decision-making processes related to school repairs. Through a series of meetings,

stakeholders decided what renovations were most necessary, although most of the teachers and staff refused to take part in the physical labor required for the renovation. Further, the students were adamant that classroom paint colors needed to be vibrant, and fought against school administrators with the support of female schoolteachers. These arguments highlighted the resistance by the students to the social and political structure of the school. Further, contrary to what the administration expected, when given the opportunity to actively participate in the renovation project; the schoolgirls clearly articulated their needs and interests (Herrera, 2006).

For Herrera (2006), the willingness of the female schoolteachers to embrace and support the resistance of their students demonstrates the transformative power of participatory action oriented development projects. The researcher encourages further action-oriented research as it can have a positive impact on oppressive and restrictive social structures in places like Egypt. Lastly, since school is often where gendered values are reinforced, freedom from hegemonic social structures begins in the classroom (Herrera, 2006).

Zaalouk's (2004) examination of rural schools in Egypt similarly exemplifies scholarship situated in critical feminist literature. Her study led to the development of a project aimed at transforming Egyptian primary education at all levels. In 1992, the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (Unicef) partnered with Egypt's MoE to bring community education to Egypt. Utilizing the community schools model in the hamlets of rural Upper Egypt, the project was principally interested in providing quality basic education to those most marginalized, primarily girls and women

from remote rural communities. Grounded in a rights-based framework, this project was predicated on the belief if local people take ownership through participation in the management of their schools, there will be a greater likelihood they are successful. This project set out to create schools run entirely by members of the school community (Zaalouk, 2004).

Zaalouk spent a little more than a year in rural Upper Egypt gathering data through interviews and informal conversations in an attempt to mobilize families and communities to participate in the community schools initiative. This study utilized ethnographic and historical methods of investigation as the backdrop for the projects' introduction. Observations and narratives from teachers, administrators, students, and community members for many of the 202 community schools were included (Zaalouk, 2004).

The author concludes the community schools model is an effective strategy for bringing about change in Egyptian schools. The schools regularly report unusually high enrollment and completion rates. In addition to academic success, this model is based on encouraging social transformation. After forming the community schools, there was pressure on the MoE to continue supporting basic education initiatives and the Department of One-Classroom-Schools was created. Furthermore, officials at UNICEF felt strongly that meeting its goal of bringing basic education to more rural children, especially girls, over time would lead to the transformation of Egyptian society (Zaalouk, 2004).

Proponents of critical feminist approaches have contributed positively to the literature regarding girls' education as they illuminate the structural and historical dimensions of power and patriarchy. By situating school culture and pedagogy within a larger social and political context, critical feminist scholars argue schools must be sites for social change (Herrera & Torres, 2006). One of the main benefits of this research is it challenges traditional conceptions of normative pedagogies by utilizing a critical approach. It also illuminates the ways in which "culture" is contested even within particular patriarchal social constraints. While critical feminist scholars have positively complicated development discourse, their work is not without limitation. These scholars' insistence on producing action to encourage social change can at times serve as a discursive formation, shifting the focus from other development logics. Additionally, the action-oriented research this approach produces can at times fall short in addressing what happens when inequalities that persist in society are replicated in organizations charged with overseeing development projects and programs (Cleaver, 2009). Nonetheless, of the prevailing development rationales examined in this review, the critical feminist perspective represents the most contextually and historically grounded approach for examining the affects of discursive constructions of "womanhood" in education policy discourse in revolutionary Egypt. By illuminating the ways in which political contests take place within structured social frames, this critical feminist logic provides the foundation necessary for examining the role the revolution plays as a site for the current and future transformation of social forms. This particular characterization of the critical

feminist lens is also the most responsive to the conceptual frameworks this dissertation research seeks to employ, the vital conjuncture and discursive effects.

### **Addressing gaps in the literature**

Since the 1970s, education policy concerned with the ‘development’ of girls and women has focused primarily on their role in expanding economic growth. This approach led to policies addressing issues related to educational access for girls throughout the global south in order to maximize productivity and economic efficiency (Assaad et al., 2010). With regard to the MENA region, this approach has often implicated ‘local customs’ as an impediment to the pragmatism that is necessary for producing ‘progressive’ development outcomes. While investment in the economic potential of women and girls is still utilized as a preeminent strategy to promote development, other approaches have emerged with alternatives. Critical and capabilities oriented approaches to education policy attempt to examine the broader social, political, and historical dimensions surrounding rationales for promoting girls’ education and how they guide development projects and programs challenging the dominant neoliberal development discourse (Herrera & Torres, 2006). Programs and projects that claim to examine factors that constrain opportunities while encouraging transformative agency in women as a means of expanding capabilities bring with them material benefits to participants, namely in the form of attracting the attention of funding agencies. The capabilities approach does not however provide an adequate framework for examining the discursive formations of womanhood present in revolutionary Egypt. While it is unlikely these alternative approaches will replace the ever-influential human capital approach in education policy

discussions that target girls, it is clear they have made an impression on the development community as they challenge the dominance of policies informed by neoliberal priorities.

Through utilizing a critical poststructural approach, this research begins the work of disentangling broader social, political, historical and cultural dimensions of power that guide the different rationales for promoting girls' education in Egypt. This dissertation research also attempts to draw on the contributions of critical feminist scholars in examining constructions of womanhood at a time of political tumult. This addresses the existing gap in the literature concerning the effect discourse has on the local peoples and institutions, providing voice to individuals who are targets of development efforts in the MENA region, and in Egypt in particular.

## **Conclusion**

This dissertation attempts to build on the contributions of leading scholars in the field of international development education. The review of the literature identifies challenges with current research through examining prevailing logics of girls' education; the human capital, human capabilities, and critical feminist approaches. By utilizing a critical feminist and poststructural analytical lens this literature review raising new issues regarding the discursive effects of policy discourse promoting new directions for educational research. Along with the research problem and conceptual framework presented in Chapter One, this review also informs the nature and direction of this study. The following chapter discusses the methodological considerations for examining this vertical case study providing the scaffolding needed before undertaking data collection and analysis.

## **Chapter Three: Research methodology and methods**

### **Introduction**

This chapter presents in greater detail the methodological dimensions that guide this research. These considerations stem from the primary objective of this study: to disentangle narrow understandings of ‘culture’ from dominant development discourse/s by examining how, when, and by whom ‘culture’ is implicated as an impediment to ‘progress’ in leading education policy declaration and in relation to an educational intervention strategy. This study also explores the ways in which (and to what extent) transnational and national development imperatives relate to local understandings regarding marriage and girls’ education in rural Upper Egypt during this revolutionary period. To address these subject areas, this study utilizes a qualitative research design. The main levels examined in this vertical case study are; (1) transnational and national, (2) policy implementation level (locally based NGOs and MoE officials), and (3) Upper Egyptian communities. Along with the literature review, the design of this study is used to address the following research questions:

(1) In what ways do the discourse/s associated with the UNGEI and GEIE relate to the stated values, principles and objectives of the Ishraq program?

(2) How do former Ishraq participants, non-participants, and Ishraq stakeholders articulate the relationship between marriage and girls' education?

(3) How do former Ishraq participants, non-participants, and Ishraq stakeholders, articulate the relationship between the Egyptian revolution and issues surrounding girls' education in rural Upper Egypt?

The

remainder of this chapter discusses to a greater degree exploratory research, methodological considerations, the design of the study, methods used, research instruments, data collection procedures, data analysis procedures, ethical considerations, and limitations of the study.

### **Exploratory research**

While carrying out preliminary research for a project in which I was involved, I examined an evaluative report for an NGO sponsored second chance girls' school program in rural Upper Egypt, the Ishraq program. In this report the authors found it generally difficult to assess the effect marriage was having on the participants in the program. The expressed intent of the program was to encourage girls and their families to consider delaying marriage in order to increase school completion in the target areas. The logic being, women with higher levels of education tend to earn more in the labor market, and as a result can demand more from their suitors. I found the ways in which marriage was implicated, as almost exclusively an impediment to increased personal economic growth very interesting as alternative explanations were not addressed. As a result, I



sought out individuals within the sponsoring organization and with the help of a personal contact I was able to secure an internship<sup>9</sup>. During the months of June and July 2013 as part of my internship I worked on three projects; a national survey on Egyptian youth, and two educational intervention programs whose target is girls and women. In addition to providing me with valuable professional experience in the field of development education, it also served to further ground my research questions, illuminate potential areas of exploration, and challenge some of my existing assumptions regarding this research topic.

### **Methodological considerations**

This study is informed largely by poststructural assumptions. This approach to social inquiry shares the ontological view with other interpretive approaches that human interaction and in this regard, policy-formation and discourse, is a meaning making process. Yet it goes further than interpretivism in suggesting that meanings are created by unequal constructions of power and are contested through human interaction by different social and political actors, and that understanding of these meanings is always partial and fragmented (Howarth & Griggs, 2012). Further, human phenomena travel through the social world in the form of discourse shaped by cultural, economic, and political forces. Poststructural analysis of policy discourse is concerned with the ways in which different social actors respond to contextually-rooted constructions of power that guide and reinforce normative social and cultural understandings of human behavior (Howarth & Griggs, 2012). The ontologically relative assumptions congruent with poststructuralism regarding human behavior and the constructions of meaning will inform the methods

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<sup>9</sup> This internship served as the inspiration for the vignettes included in Chapter One.

employed in this proposed study. These methods include the use of CDA, participant and non-participant observation and conducting semi-structured interviews.

### **Design of study**

At the core of this dissertation research is the examination of the interplay between transnational development discourse and the ways in which women in rural Upper Egypt (Ishraq participants and non-participants) engage in the social contests concerning marriage and education during this revolutionary moment. As a result, a qualitative case study approach that is grounded in ethnographic methodological considerations is most suitable for the overall design of the study. More specifically this study employs the *vertical case study* approach, as this is best suited for examining the transnational, national, and local movement that occurs across and between various spheres of political, social, economic and cultural influence (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2009). Research in the field of comparative and international education that utilizes this design has tended to focus on producing strong critiques concerning the impact of neoliberal trends on education by following development discourse from the offices of policy makers to the classrooms and communities of individuals at the target level. Vertical case studies such as this one are not only interested in examining the relationship between policy and practice from the top down, but also from the bottom up, and even horizontally. Analysis of these complex and interconnected levels is integral for uncovering the far-reaching implications of international education policy. Bartlett and Vavrus (2009), suggest research that utilizes this approach contributes greatly to the available literature as it furthers the notion that comparative studies in international

education needn't be the exclusive domain of cross-country comparisons. Further, vertical case study approaches to research design also reveal what Vavrus and Bartlett (2009) call the transversal element, a conceptual thread that strikes through the various levels of the vertical case. Along with the vertical and horizontal relationships between policy and practice, the transversal element moves between and across all levels of the case. In regards to this proposed study, the transversal element is that of the aforementioned failed-culture approach to development; the idea that the guiding principle for undertaking 'development work' in the MENA region should always begin with altering the habits and traditions of local people.

Grounding education policy analyses within and across broader socio-cultural contexts has not always been the most widely used approach to research in the field of comparative education. Earlier studies undertaken in the MENA region like Singerman's (1995) analysis of the informal social, political, and economic networks among Cairo's poorest residents and Starrett's (1998) examination of Islamic based trends of the 1990s and their impact on education in Egypt tended to focus on situating social phenomena associated with marriage and education more broadly. This approach has shifted more recently to include situating analyses of specific education policies (and the interventions they are associated with) within a larger socio-cultural, historical, and postcolonial conceptual framework. Concerns regarding the space between policy and practice are raised in Abu-Lughod, Adely, and Hasso's (2009) critical analysis of the 2005 UN Human Development Report on Arab women. This work attempts to challenge the universalized notions of 'empowerment' and 'development' articulated in the report by

suggesting they emerge largely from the tendency of global development agendas to operate from deficit oriented colonial-era assumptions regarding gender relations in the MENA region.

Shirazi (2012) raises similar concerns with regard to constructions of masculinity among Jordanian adolescent boys. However, his largely ethnographic case study draws more specifically on the contributions of Bartlett and Vavrus (2009) who advocate for more integrated and comprehensive forms of policy analyses. This is grounded in the assumption that examining development interventions requires an inductive mode of research inquiry that stems from the interplay between global development imperatives and specific national level education reform strategies both vertically and horizontally. Shirazi (2012) articulates this clearly as he argues for a more broad understanding of the Jordanian national campaigns of the early 2000s (*Knights of Change* and *Jordan First*) and the ways in which they aimed to re-shape the lives of young people through school based reform. He suggests these national efforts must also be examined against the backdrop of larger international development strategies shaped by Orientalist assumptions of education and masculinity in the MENA as well as the dominance of the neoliberal economic view on the importance of the knowledge economy to the region. The design of this proposed research draws on the contributions of all of these scholars. However, it is through employing this particular approach to the vertical case that is most appropriate for examining the issue of marriage and education through the interplay between and among the UNGEI, GEIE, the Ishraq program and its participants. Figure 2.1 (see p. 89) illustrates how the design of this vertical case study design corresponds

with the research questions that are posed and the modes of inquiry that are employed to address them.

### **Sampling**

For the purposes of interviewing, this study included 46 participants in total. I also conducted numerous observations where many others were present as part of various meetings, events, and informal conversations. I asked participants to complete consent documents I had prepared before open-ended interviews, while securing the verbal consent of others before, during, or after conducting observations. The participants I interviewed as part of this study include former Ishraq beneficiaries/participants, young women from Ishraq control-villages, Ishraq program staff, youth center staff, and individuals from locally-based implementing NGOs. Among the many present while I conducted observations where, senior level Ishraq staff, senior staff from the MoE and MoY, senior politicians from the National Council for Women (NCW), and members of the diplomatic mission of the Dutch Embassy in Cairo.

### **Macro-level**

At the macro-level the analysis will focus on the UNGEI and the GEIE. As described in Chapter One, these initiatives emerged largely as a result of the 2000 Millennium Declaration. They subsequently represent the most significant effort to increase educational access in Egypt since the Nasser-led government mandated the elimination of school-related fees in the early 1960s (Unicef, 2007). As a result the UNGEI and the GEIE will be the subject of concern in the macro-level of this analysis. Additionally, as described by Levinson and Sutton (2001) policies are not simply

documents to which we are beholden, but ideas and values communicated by people. At the outset of this study I intended to conduct semi-structured interviews with 2-3 individuals who were involved in crafting the GEIE. However, I was only able to observe two senior level government officials who were deeply involved in this undertaking during key meetings with Ishraq program officers. These observations took place on 3 different occasions and I was able to learn a great deal about their involvement in the GEIE through their contributions.

### **Meso-level**

This portion of the study will begin with a critical examination of the 2007 Ishraq Full Report, which deals primarily with evaluating the effectiveness of the pilot and expansion phases of the program. Like policies, reports such as these serve to communicate different information to specific stakeholders and the general public (Levinson & Sutton, 2001). As a result, these documents are produced in English and Arabic and address international donors, government and NGO partners by name, and the development community in the MENA region at large. The earlier publication discusses the first five years of program implementation and charts outcomes, while the more recent report focuses on readdressing the program objectives and stating the measured outcomes since the scaling up of Ishraq. The 2007 report is important to include, as the local sample of this study is comprised of women who would have participated in Ishraq during the first five years.

Another essential component of the meso-level of the vertical case is the relationship between those responsible for the support, funding, design, and

implementation of the Ishraq program: the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (EKN), Population Council, the Egyptian Ministry of Youth (MoY), and the Department of Adult Education (DAE). As a result, my analysis draws on observation findings from various meetings and events I attended where individuals from among these particular groups of stakeholders were in attendance to discuss the Ishraq program.

### **Micro-level**

The participants at the micro level of this analysis are from a select group of former Ishraq participants and non-participants, from its expansion phase as well as staff from youth centers, where Ishraq classes are held. This sample includes 18 former Ishraq beneficiaries from three different villages, 13 non-participants from two different villages, and seven youth center staff members from three different villages (six women and one man). Including these particular individuals who are from the earliest phases of the program is important to this proposed study because all of these women would have at some point considered how to navigating the landscape of marriage and education in their own lives (before, during, or after their participation).

### **Sampling Narrative**

I originally set out to draw study participants randomly from rosters of those who were previously registered with the program, and over the age of 18 in Beni Suef and Minya. However, these rosters were not as helpful as I anticipated since Ishraq participants registered for the program informally and not through the use of government issued documents. In many cases it was through their participation where many families were able to secure birth certificates and national identification numbers for their

respective dependents, a prerequisite for transitioning to middle school. This issue was made more difficult when it became clear that participants' personal information (from the pilot and expansion phases) was not as readily available as I was led to believe. When I first requested this information from Cairo-based staff I was told that I would have access to all the rosters from all different implementation periods, since Population Council had always been responsible for the M&E. However, when I began working to arrange for site-visits to Upper Egypt I was told that I should consult with the former director of the Ishraq program, someone who served in this capacity during the pilot and expansion phases. After securing an interview with the former director, I requested the rosters and was informed that upon leaving Population Council she had left all of her Ishraq related files on the organization's server for documentation purposes, or more appropriately as she put it, "...I left the files with them (Population Council) for when projects like this one come up," referring to this dissertation research. Needless to say, most of the files I was able to secure from the Population Council IT department were not particularly helpful. While I am not suggesting this information was intentionally being kept from me, it was clear at the time of my request Population Council was busy preparing final reports to submit to their parent organization in New York. Further, with the dissemination conference complete and with no plans or available funds to carryout any additional program evaluation I found it very difficult to engage Cairo-based staff in conversations that left them supporting any logistical dimension related to my carrying out this research. Despite, these apparent challenges, I found members of the Ishraq team very willing to answer questions I had regarding their experience as program officers,



many of which are included in this chapter. In the end after consulting with Ishraq program staff in Cairo it became apparent that it would not be possible to include the Minya site in this study. Largely due to my inability to access the original program rosters and because program no longer operates in that governorate and program officers have lost touch with their former partners who live and work in Minya governorate.

The breakthrough in reaching former participants from the earliest phases of the program came in February 2014 where I learned Ishraq continues to operate with the support of Save the Children Egypt in Beni Suef. With the help of former Ishraq Program Officer Abdullah, who I met while working with Population Council in the summer of 2013, I was able to arrange a meeting with Nourihan the director of the *Organization for the Development of Youth and the Environment* (ODYE), the locally-based NGO responsible for overseeing the implementation of Ishraq on behalf of Save the Children Egypt across Beni Suef. Abdullah, a native of Fayoum in his early 40s, has been working in the development field for the past decade continues to work with Population Council where he currently manages the organization's entrepreneurship training program for women in rural Fayoum. As a result, he is widely known among many working in the development field at the provincial level in Fayoum and Beni Suef<sup>10</sup>. Abdullah seemed very willing and eager to provide me with support by offering to put me in contact with many of his colleagues. His support extended beyond our initial meeting and subsequent interview, as he would call and send me e-mail messages periodically to ask if I needed

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<sup>10</sup> As a note, together Beni Suef and Fayoum are often considered making up the northernmost area of Upper Egypt. There is less than 30 miles between the city centers of Beni Suef and Fayoum, and the villages in Beni Suef that sit the farthest to the west border Fayoum's easternmost villages (Hopkins & Saad, 2004).

any additional assistance. I appreciated this generous support very much and would let him know how thankful I was each time we spoke. In fact, during my first meeting with Nourihan in Beni Suef at the offices of ODYE Abdullah came to visit after hearing I would be in town with my research assistant Mona. Nourihan, a woman in her mid 30s is a native of Beni Suef and has served in the capacity as director of ODYE for the previous six years.

During all of my time in Egypt I was based in Cairo, I stayed in my family's home in the Maadi neighborhood just south of the city center. My living situation made it very easy for me to stay in contact with staff at Population Council, as their office building is also located in Maadi, and is a 20 minute walk or a 5 minute trip on public transportation from where I was staying. Traveling to Beni Suef proved slightly more challenging, after discussing my research plans with Population Council staff and considering that Beni Suef is only two hours drive from Cairo I decided that I would make day trips instead of staying in the community.

In the weeks leading up to Ramadan in the summer of 2014 I made arrangements to travel from Cairo to Beni Suef to meet Nourihan. Nourihan then introduced us to Faisal, a ODYE Program Coordinator, who took us to meet with 18 former Ishraq participants between the ages 18-24 over the next three weeks. During this period we visited three of the five villages were "Ishraq" villages across Beni Suef governorate. While we had some opportunity to walk through the communities and spend time with local residents, most of our time in these villages was spent meeting with these young

women in the youth centers where Ishraq related activities regularly take place<sup>11</sup>. Faisal's assistance also made it possible for me to meet with various Ishraq Promoters and civil servants (who are responsible for overseeing the Youth Centers) from the same three villages. This group of mostly women provided a different perspective for examining the ways in which gender contests surrounding marriage and education take place in these communities. On occasion participants appeared at odds with the program's mission and curricular components, and they often raised concerns regarding the commitments of participants and their families. Based on the conditions of their funding, Save the Children Egypt contracted ODYE, and in turn they team hired women in the target villages to work with the girls on the literacy and life skills components of the Ishraq curriculum. The Ishraq Promoters, as they are known, were mainly civil servants who previously worked as either schoolteachers or with the DAE<sup>12</sup>.

This research also draws on the experiences of women who had not participated in the Ishraq program. Since an experimental research design was used in assessing the effectiveness of the program at the conclusion of the expansion phase, I decided to meet with women who had no association with Ishraq. This was helpful for comparing experiences of Ishraq participants with those from similar communities. These interviews and conversations positively complicated my own understanding on the sorts of social and cultural circumstances that affect and are affected by girls and women in rural Upper Egypt. With the help of two female volunteers from ODYE I was able to return to Beni

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<sup>11</sup> Youth centers are public facilities that operate under the auspices of the MoY, and are located in almost every rural village and urban community across Egypt (Population Council, 2013).

<sup>12</sup> The Department of Adult Education serves as the primary governmental partner for all public or private initiatives working in the areas of literacy and/or basic education (Population Council, 2013).

Suef during my last few weeks in Egypt to travel to two of the original control villages and walk through the streets asking women who are of a similar demographic as the former Ishraq participants, if they would participate in the study. However, it is not known whether or not the women we interviewed over this three day period had been included in the original control group for the quasi-experimental research that formed the basis for the earliest program assessments. These two villages we visited are within walking distance of one another and are connected by a small bridge that runs over one of the Nile's many canals. We were fortunate to have organized our visits to take place on Wednesdays, which is typically when farmers and artisans bring their goods to sell at the market and is frequented by the residents of all the surrounding villages. Also, since many of the visits we made to these particular villages took place during Ramadan the market was particularly busy, filled with mostly women buying and selling to stock up for the coming week of fasting days.

## **Research methods**

### **Macro-level**

In examining the UNGEI and the GEIE the primary method draws mainly from CDA based on an adapted form of Fairclough's (1989) three stage approach: description, interpretation, explanation. The approach used in the interpretation and explanation will be addressed broadly in the analysis section of this chapter, as they are not as bound to the text alone. Along with employing syntactic and semantic methods of CDA inquiry, the interpretations and explanations of the UNGEI and GEIE will draw from the poststructural conceptual framework that informs this study and findings from interviews.

The description of these documents will focus on two of the three elements in Fairclough's (1989) approach, vocabulary and grammar. The process of describing the UNGEI and GEIE is important, as it provides the foundation for creating the conceptual codes that will guide the interpretation and explanation. With regard to the vocabulary used in the two documents, words will be categorized as being contested, having relational meaning, and/or being ideologically oriented. The approach to analyzing the grammar will focus on identifying the frequency and intensity of the use of voice (passive vs. active), and whether sentences are positive or negative. It will also be important to identify (from the texts) examples where (often seemingly incongruent) sentences are linked together to form and help reinforce certain logics to bolster specific arguments related to marriage and girls' education in Egypt, as this is another important element in understanding grammatical structures. In surveying both the vocabulary and grammar used in the UNGEI and GEIE there will be an emphasis on detailing their recurring use of specific linguistic themes as suggested in Vavrus and Kwauk's (2013) critical analysis of the World Bank's global school fee elimination reforms.

As this research is not exclusively a textual analysis study, the examination of the macro-sphere draws on observations of involving key actors at the policy level, specifically those who came to influence the GEIE. Many who contributed to this reform are policy makers, scholars, practitioners, and social activists based in Cairo. Including their voices in this study is essential as policy analysis cannot exist in isolation of the policymaking process, and the people associated with it often produce interventions (Levinson & Sutton, 2001). These observations they among other things, explore what

participants describe as their interests and motivations in working towards designing and implementing the GEIE as well as their expectations for working with various stakeholders.

### **Meso-level**

To examine the complex relationship between Population Council and its partners, I utilized a combination of textual analysis and open-ended interviewing methods. At this level of the vertical case (as indicated previously), I draw on CDA to examine the 2007 Ishraq Full Report. In addition to utilizing the same analytical tools as those used at the macro-level, this research introduces the use of intertextual analysis, which examines the dialogic qualities of texts.

Intertextuality refers specifically to the ways in which texts communicate by building on previous knowledge and as a result contribute to and reinforce existing discourse/s. Fairclough (1992) suggests the two types of intertextuality, manifest and constitutive, are different strategies employed by authors' unconsciously to bolster a given argument. Manifest intertextuality refers to *direct* references to prior texts, while constitutive intertextuality, involves *indirect* references to prior knowledge and not necessarily specific texts. Identifying direct references to the UNGEI and GEIE in the texts included in meso-level analysis is important for examining the ways in which these texts communicate directly with one another. However, identifying the ways in which constitutive intertextuality operates in the Ishraq and Population Council Reports is

essential for examining the role power plays in legitimating particular understandings concerning the relationship between marriage and education for girls and women in Egypt. Examining constitutive intertextuality is an essential component for uncovering the hidden discourse/s found in texts and represents their relationship to social practices and to the social world at large (Fairclough, 1992).

Along with employing textual analysis, research undertaken at the meso-level includes the use of a series of open-ended interviews conducted with Population Council staff and Ishraq program stakeholders. The primary purpose of these interviews was to examine the relationship between Population Council, the Egyptian MoY, the Department of Adult Education (DAE), and the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (EKN) in supporting, designing, and implementing Ishraq.

### **Micro-level**

Education policy is formulated for ‘local’ implementation. However, consulting the “local” is often lacking in policy formulations resulting in what Levinson and Sutton (2001) dub *policy appropriation*. This phenomenon describes the ways in which people and communities at the local level understand (and contest) the roles and responsibilities they play relative to an intervention, reform strategy, or more generally (as is the case in this study) development discourse around a social issue. In this regard, this study grounds the relationship between marriage and education in the lived experiences of individuals at the local level. As targets of national and international development strategies, it is appropriate that individuals at the local level serve as the focus for the analysis of the micro-sphere of the vertical case.

In the analysis of the ‘local’ this study employs the use of open-ended interviews and informal conversations. Interviews of participants and informal conversations with individuals at the meso and local levels produce what Geertz (1973) calls *thick descriptions* of the insider or emic perspective. The purpose for using open-ended interviewing techniques is to provide participants with the opportunity to lead conversations about the thematic areas of this study (marriage and education). This is not to suggest that there will be a lack of consistency regarding the issues addressed across interviews. The informal approach to the interviews and conversations conducted with Ishraq participants and non-participants is potentially less intrusive, more appropriate given the social and cultural context, and congruent with the ethnographic design and interpretive assumptions that inform this study (Fetterman, 2010). This mode of inquiry also reveals information regarding individuals’ experiences as participants in Ishraq not addressed in the Population Council baseline and end-line assessments, as their researchers employed exclusively closed-ended interview techniques. Additional details regarding specific open-ended interview protocol can be found in Appendix C.

### **Data collection**

In addressing the different levels of the vertical case, this proposed study employs a combination of data collection procedures regarding interviewing and documenting field observations. In-depth interviews with Ishraq program staff and local participants were recorded, transcribed, translated (for interviews conducted in Arabic), and annotated using notes compiled during interviewing. In conducting field observations note taking was essential, as recordings at times proved distracting for participants. At the conclusion



of all informal observations and conversations, hand written notes and jottings were typed and supplemented with additional observations from others, as suggested by Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (2011).

Figure 2.1. Overview of research design

	<b>MACRO</b>	<b>MESO</b>	<b>MICRO</b>
<b>UNIT OF ANALYSIS</b>	UN Girls Education Initiative (UNGEI), Girls Education Initiative Egypt (GEIE), policy makers and civil Servants from MoY, MoE, and the Netherlands Diplomatic Mission in Egypt	Program documents & Population Council Cairo Based Staff	Former Ishraq Beneficiaries and non-participants from rural Beni Suef (women in their mid to late 20s) & Staff from local implementation teams
<b>SAMPLE</b>	Policy documents & individuals from MoY, MoE, and EKN	Program Reports & interviews with 8 key stakeholders (6 men and 2 women)	18 former beneficiaries, 13 non-participants, 7 youth center staff members (6 women and 1 man)
<b>METHODS</b>	Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) & Observations	CDA, interviews, conversations, and observations	Interviews, conversations, and observations
<b>RESEARCH QUESTIONS ADDRESSED</b>	RQ (1)	RQ (1, 2, & 3)	RQ (2 & 3)

### Data analysis

The analyses of the research findings for the different components of the study (CDA, interviewing, and informal conversations) were conducted in a particular sequence. Analyses of texts (particularly the UNGEI and GEIE) were conducted first, as

these reform efforts and policy directives provided the rationale for launching Ishraq and similar programs. The UNGEI and GEIE also happen to make up the macro level in this vertical case study. The second component of the data analysis included the analysis of remaining texts and a thorough examination of the findings from interviewing and informal conversations.

With regard to the analysis of the texts included in the study's macro-level sample the analysis will draw on a set of questions adapted from Gee's (1999) work on using CDA as a tool for social inquiry (p. 38):

- What discourse/s are implicated in the language used in the texts GEIE? What linguistic elements do the texts employ in situating various actors socially, politically, culturally, historically?
- What Conversations<sup>13</sup> are relevant to understanding the language used in the texts and, and in what ways do they contribute to other social, political, cultural, and/or historical Conversations concerning marriage and girls' education in the MENA region, particularly in Egypt?
- What sorts of relationships among institutional, social, and historical discourses are represented in the texts? How are these various discourses presented as aligned or non-aligned?

The findings from interviewing and informal conversations integrate what is learned from the textual analysis phases of the research in order to examine what many

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<sup>13</sup> Gee (1999) suggests, Conversations with a "C" are made up of "more than just words... they are better viewed as (historic) conversations between and among discourses not just among individual people" (p. 34).

scholars refer to broadly as the link between policy and practice (Levinson & Sutton, 2001). This phase of the analysis focuses on continuing to build on the identification and exploration of thematic trends from the textual analysis phases. As a result, a coding scheme developed worked to ensure the analysis was systematic and rigorous. In documenting the analytic process I employed a number of practical tools; constructing analytic memos, journaling, and developing concept maps. To allow for broader themes to emerge, the analysis phase of this study relied largely on an inductive open coding approach. Following this exercise as suggested by Corbin and Strauss (2008), the focus shifted towards identifying and integrating emerging concepts from the analysis of the policy documents, observations, and interviews. Regarded as axial coding, this process explored potential linkages between emergent concepts and themes, and the poststructural conceptual grounding of this study. In this regard, the theoretical framework served as a point of reference to which findings may be juxtaposed (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

### **Issues of validity and reliability**

Threats to validity and reliability in qualitative research design are ever-present and complex (Maxwell, 2005). The aim of this study is to foreground the lived experiences of individuals and communities affected by international development agendas. As such, understating the emic view of this relationship is profoundly important. This study did not aim to represent the emic view following specific historical or politically situated pre-determined logics. Thus, issues of validity and reliability were addressed following a postmodern and poststructural logic. In addition to utilizing

conventional strategies such as triangulation and member checks, this study employed approaches to encourage researcher reflexivity. A sustained engagement of issues related to researcher bias are addressed through intensive memo writing, journaling and continual engagement with research participants (Van Maanen, 2011).

### **Ethical considerations and study limitations**

Egypt has been in the midst of a revolution since early 2011; as such the political landscape is tenuous and ever evolving. Conducting research under these circumstances presented some challenges beyond what is typical in the field of international comparative education. This made identifying and managing ethical considerations and study limitations exceptionally important. This section addresses these issues concerning my role as a researcher and the design of this study.

My role as an Egyptian-American male researcher matters greatly in that it undoubtedly affects everything from the conceptual frameworks I choose to employ to the ways in which I was received by my participants. This study is interested in people's perspectives regarding marriage and girls' education in hopes of better understanding particular cultural phenomena. Social scientists, particularly anthropologists, have long been concerned with trying to understand the insider or emic view. However until the 1950s and 60s social science research undertaken in the Global South was almost exclusively the domain of scholars situated in the Global North. The scholarship that emerged during the anti-colonial movement in the Global South openly challenged many of the intellectual advances in the social sciences of the previous century. Fanon (1961,

1963) and Said (1978) were very critical of Western scholarship concerning the Middle East and Africa during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, seeing it as mostly a colonial project that aimed to fashion local people in ways that lacked any real complexity relative to their Western counterparts. These developments helped pave the way for scholars with cultural ties to the MENA to conduct ethnographically oriented research in the region. Hoodfar (1997), Abu-Lughod (2000), and more recently Adeley (2012) and Shirazi (2012) suggest there are certain opportunities for scholars employing ethnographic methods with ties to the region due to their intimate knowledge of the research context. However, these scholars warn that cultural familiarity is not a substitute for the intellectual rigor needed to engage the subject of research appropriately. Additionally, being perceived as an ‘insider’ or at the least not exclusively as an ‘outsider’ can present challenges to researchers as they work towards establishing rapport with participants and functioning in the research context in general.

I found myself in very similar circumstances as an Egyptian-American male researcher. My parents left Egypt to live in United States before I was born, and while I typically spend around two months out of the year in Egypt, I maintain a more permanent residence in the United States. During adolescence I also lived in Kuwait for nearly three years while my father worked at a university. I mostly grew up in a small town in southern Minnesota as the youngest of three children in a slightly conservative, Arabic speaking Egyptian Muslim household. While not meant to serve as an exhaustive characterization of how I perceive myself, these experiences have in many ways shaped who I am personally and as a researcher. My cultural background and fluency in

colloquial Egyptian Arabic allow me to approach this work from the perspective of an informed researcher. However, this is not to suggest that my Egyptian-American upbringing did not present some challenges while conducting this research. There were times when participants called into question my ability to write authentically about the topic of my dissertation as someone who does not live in Egypt permanently. Conversely, there were other instances where I was commended by participants for being keenly interested in issues related to education and marriage in Upper Egypt. On occasion participants, mainly those living in Cairo, wrongly assumed I was a student at the American University of Cairo or an Egyptian international student studying in the United States due to what they identified was my strong command of colloquial Egyptian Arabic. Although, on two different occasions participants with backgrounds in Arabic language studies commented that even though they were impressed that an Egyptian who was born in the United States could speak Arabic so well, my Arabic grammar was still very poor and needed some work. Narayan (1993) suggests researchers with multiple cultural and linguistic identities often find themselves employing different behavioral strategies while working in the field.

Along with my cultural background, undertaking a study concerning girls' education in Egypt as a male researcher presented both challenges and opportunities. With regard to practical considerations (access to participants) there were no issues of concern. Ishraq participants, as an integral part of their experience, worked closely with female and male trainers, teachers, and researchers. Further, there is a great deal of latitude afforded to men who are working in rural areas in Egypt, an issue that makes

establishing rapport with male participants easier. However, gender is a very important consideration in relation to data collection and analysis. As mentioned previously, I draw on a variety of perspectives in both of these phases of the research by working with local informants. Drawing on the perspectives of home-based Egyptian researchers, who also happen to be women of a similar demographic as the participants in the local sample of this study added greater depth to observation findings and data analysis.

Working with research assistants is also an essential component of what Patton (2002) calls investigator triangulation, or a process where each investigator examines the issue of study using the same qualitative methods of inquiry. Taking into considerations measures of inter-rater reliability is important to this interpretive study, as the main research instrument is ultimately human and fallible. Individual researchers are incapable of observing everything that is happening during a given interview or observation. Further, there is also very little doubt that each researcher will perceive the same course of events differently. While the distinctions found between the various perspectives of researcher may be viewed as inconsistencies, in the context of this study they provide the opportunity for uncovering deeper meaning in the research findings (Patton, 2002).

There are also practical considerations that must be taken into account while doing social science research in Egypt, mainly securing government approvals. However, these considerations did not affect my study in the least, as it did not meet the conditions necessary for requiring government approvals. As a qualitative study this proposal does not need to undergo a review by the Central Authority for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS). As an American citizen and Egyptian permanent resident the

arrangements that surround my working with Population Council operate much more simply. Non-Egyptians (in the legal sense) are required to submit a number of official personal documents to various Egyptian government ministries to secure the requisite approval to work with NGOs like Population Council.

Limitations concerning the design of this study center around the role transferability and generalizability play in qualitative research. This critical poststructural vertical case study research design explores the links between policy and practice through inductive analytical processes. As a result, this study was not designed to produce findings that are particularly generalizable. Findings revealed from conducting ethnographic field research typically follow an effort towards representing social phenomena with greater contextual depth (Fetterman, 2010). This is not to suggest what was learned from conducting this study should not be used to inform directions for future research or policy making in the MENA or elsewhere. This study is particularly useful to others in the field of international development education concerned with the ways in which the lives of those who are targets of education policies are understood and represented in the literature.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter provides an overview of the methodological considerations associated with the proposed vertical case study. It explores the link between the qualitative ethnographic research design and the paradigmatic assumptions of poststructuralism. This included a discussion on the use of CDA, interviewing, and observation as the primary methods of inquiry that will be used in the study. The chapter



also discussed sampling strategies for identifying the relevant texts and participants that will make up the different levels of the vertical case. Data collection procedures such as note taking and analytical processes like conceptual coding were also raised. The chapter concludes by exploring potential ethical considerations and limitations typically associated with conducting research as an Egyptian-American during this revolutionary moment.

### **Chapter Four: The incoherence of success**

The following chapter exposes the disjunctures of what constitutes “success” between study participants. Emerging from an analysis of interview findings and from reviewing my fieldnotes I found that participants’ notions of success vary greatly. In reference to the success of the Ishraq program, and with regard to participants’ understanding of their success as beneficiaries, the findings suggest there is a link between ideas of what constitutes success and individual’s understandings of the relationship between marriage and education for girls and women in post-revolution rural Upper Egypt. This chapter exposes these disjunctures by examining the ways in which success is understood and operationalized at various levels of this vertical case study, revealing what constitutes success among participants at the most local levels (view from below), program officers at the national and provincial levels (view from the middle), and those responsible for the design and funding of the Ishraq program and policy makers situated inside and outside of Egypt (view from above). Additionally, this chapter examines these disparate notions of success particularly as they move across and between the areas of policy and practice, which begins the work of addressing the fundamental question: whose success matters most, and why?

While this chapter works to describe, using a number of methodological tools, the varying notions of success as they shape and are shaped by individuals’ understandings of marriage and education in revolutionary times, simply mapping these utterances as they appear in the research findings is not remarkable. In examining power differentials between stakeholders that render some versions of success more valuable than others, this

work brings to the fore new ways of thinking about past, current, and future social relations in Egypt. Dimensions of structural power create hierarchal groupings that reveal the Egyptian state as still largely a projection of Cairene authority where the periphery is understood as spatially different and temporally distant. In this chapter I present examples of participants describing the ways in which they understand the meaning of success in the context of their involvement with the Ishraq program. In analyzing the findings related in this chapter I draw on Levinson and Sutton's (2001) *policy appropriation* framework. This approach is useful for examining how members of the Ishraq local implementation team and former beneficiaries localize and in turn adapt some of the key elements of the intervention. Moreover, in working to locate the principles that guide the Ishraq program in the discourses of global education policy I employ the critical discourse analysis methodological approach informed by the works of Gee (1999) and Fairclough (1992). This chapter illustrates, despite the complexity in how participants at the local level understand what constitutes their own success these views are largely absent from program reports. These reports are dominated by the understandings and experiences of those involved in the design and funding of the Ishraq program. Individuals who are also closest to the policy-making process make claims about what constitutes the success of others by drawing on the authoritative power of broader international development education discourses.

### **Success and the hyperbolic anecdote: personal triumphs as evidence of success**

In December 2013 I attended the *Neqdar Nesharek* (We can participate) winter workshop at the Sheraton in the seaside resort town of Gouna just south of Hurghada on

Egypt's Red Sea coast. This afforded me the opportunity to meet with former Ishraq program officers retained by Population Council as part of the administrative units charged with overseeing the Neqdar Nesharek program (Neqdar for short). Neqdar, an entrepreneurship-training program targeting women in Upper Egypt (the same communities where Ishraq was implemented), was conceived and is understood to represent the logical success to the Ishraq program. As a result, Population Council continued to employ many of the Ishraq program officers now as part of Neqdar's implementation team, this includes retaining the services of the same provincial NGOs to carry the work at the most local levels.

As the second day of the Neqdar workshop drew to a close I sat and spoke with Ashraf over tea as we waited for dinner. I met Ashraf, an Ishraq program officer in his mid-40s, on a number of occasions some six months earlier during my previous research visit to Egypt and found him to be very willing to share his experiences. Like most of Ishraq's local program officers Ashraf is originally from Upper Egypt, and among the many duties that come with his title is the responsibility for promoting the principles of Ishraq to the local implementation team in one particular governorate. Each time we met Ashraf was sharply dressed, on occasion I would joke with him and say, "I hope when I am your age, I look as sharp as you do" to which he would respond, "Mr. Mohamed, are you calling me old? Don't worry about it, you look just fine." We developed a friendly rapport and this affinity served me particularly well during this meeting, both personally and in regard to this research. What started as a conversation about family quickly moved to politics, and before long we began discussing his experiences working with Ishraq.

Ashraf has been working with NGOs in Egypt for the last decade and at our meeting he had been with Population Council for close to four years. One of the first things we discussed was around the idea that the goals associated with development projects are often short-lived. Ashraf claimed that his experiences working in the development field leave him feeling like interventions often fail to live up to the expectations of participants and program staff. With regard to Ishraq, he remarked that when he first joined Population Council he was not convinced the program would be successful in providing opportunities for girls and women in rural communities. I asked Ashraf if he could elaborate and he went on to explain his position in greater detail:

I feel this way because many of these girls and young women come from parts of Egypt that are familiar to me, I felt like no matter how much work we do these girls would still suffer the same fate. I assumed all parents we would be dealing with would be resistant to the idea of their daughters leaving work in the fields and in the homes to study in school.

However, he told me that as time passed his views began to change. He went on to discuss that this was largely a result of encounters he had with families, specifically fathers. "Parents' willingness to support their daughters gave me a renewed sense of hope in the initiative and the belief the program was making a difference in the lives of young women," he stated. Ashraf recounted the story of one father that he felt stood out as the greatest example of how Ishraq has been successful.

After meeting one father in particular my perspective, or should I say my anxiety about Ishraq not being successful, shifted dramatically. While making our home visits in the community I encountered a father that was not only resistant to the idea of his daughter studying at the youth center, he was insulted that I would even ask him to join our program. He told us that, "a young girl stays close to her family until she is ready for marriage." Yes, he was one of the most aggressive parents we ever encountered. He went so far as to ask us never to come back to his home again. Amazingly, this same father after acquiescing to our request and

receiving some incentives to participate came to me six months later as one of the happiest men in the village. He told me that he was prepared to sell all of his clothes and all of his furniture if it meant that his daughter could finish college and become a physician. Mr. Mohamed, I can't tell you how wonderful that made me feel. I knew then that this program was different than anything I had experienced previously. I never imagined that people from these communities could shift their thinking about issues related to their children so dramatically.

At the conclusion of this recounting Ashraf with great pride remarked, that despite the challenges he and others faced in their work, this story represents the extent to which the program had been successful. I found it most remarkable that critical self-reflection was relatively absent in Ashraf's recounting how his expectations of the program were challenged by this father's actions. Why was it that in retelling his experience Ashraf did not appear interested in understanding this particular father's initial reaction to his daughter participating in the Ishraq program? I begin with this anecdote to illustrate the ways in which some participants frame their own personal and professional triumphs as evidence of Ishraq's success in meeting its stated objectives. The use of hyperbole was common in many of the stories participants related as they expressed their views of this intervention. For Ashraf and other program officers, self-satisfaction was often privileged in conversations where participants used personal stories to describe their notions of success. However, this rarely included discussing what program officers learned from the experience of implementing Ishraq. At times these participants would remark that they learned to be "better program officers" from their colleagues or superiors. Though even when prompted, these individuals almost never shared that they benefited from the relationships they developed with members of the local implementation or Ishraq participants. When former beneficiaries shared

experiences understood by other stakeholders as outside of the typical framework for what constitutes success they are mostly dismissed. This was based on the understanding that these views are a result of the same “negative cultural habits” Ishraq set out to change. Commending or even demonstrating support for beneficiaries when they made decisions in their personal lives that were understood as contradictory to the principles of the Ishraq program was perceived as an endorsement of negative cultural habits. The following example illustrates this complicated dynamic. When I met with Nada, a 24 year-old former Ishraq beneficiary, she told me she left the Ishraq program a couple of months before finishing. As a result, she never sat for the literacy exam that would have allowed her to continue to middle school. Instead, she married within a year of leaving the program, months before her 17<sup>th</sup> birthday. Nada seemed happy to talk about her experience, expressing that she learned a great deal from her teachers and friends. When I asked her to think back about what she found most helpful about the experience she said, “I learned to read; at the time I used that to help my mother. Now that I myself am a mother I can support my own children as they grow and learn.” When I asked program officers and promoters about former students like Nada they would often lament that they never completed the program. Some of the promoters who married and had children in their teens believed young women like Nada made the same mistake they had when they were young. The difference was, as Fathiya, a 29 year-old Ishraq promoter stated, “they (Ishraq beneficiaries) have an opportunity we never had, and still some cannot help from falling into the same situation.” This example illustrates how difficult it can be to find positive characterizations of individuals who are themselves the targets of development

interventions, as these perspectives are often undervalued or overlooked. As a result, mapping the terrain of success and its disjunctures as articulated at the different levels of this vertical case study begins with the view from the most local levels.

### **Notions of success from below**

When asked to describe the importance of education for girls and women, Ishraq program officers often expressed what they believe is the intrinsic value of education and schooling. In one conversation with Yasser (an Ishraq program officer) education was described as, “the key to growth and development, not just for the community but for the whole of Egypt.” He also went on to suggest that, “promoting girls’ education is important since it is so undervalued in primarily agricultural communities where we are working. The lifestyles of most farmers limit girls’ choices.” Ishraq beneficiaries, on the other hand, provided generally more varied assessments of the importance of education in their own lives based on their particular circumstances. None of the participants claimed that education was inherently bad or problematic. However many discussed some of the challenges they faced in their educational journey that led them to doubt the claim that schooling is necessarily right for everyone. Regardless of their involvement in Ishraq, all participants generally described marriage as antithetical to continuing their education although not in contradiction to what they understood as successful participation in Ishraq. In the testimony Soad, a former Ishraq beneficiary in her early 20s, addresses this issue directly in the following quote:

How can I maintain the home, take care of the kids, and my husband, and still find time and energy to go to school... marriage and education just do not go together. That doesn't mean that I was not successful in Ishraq. I finished the



program, moved on to middle school and left to get married. What I mean is that I feel I learned a lot from the program even if I didn't finish all of my schooling.

Soad's comments are similar to those shared by Nada earlier in this chapter and help illustrate the ways in which some participants have an understanding of success that is not necessarily bound by a narrow and linear view of what it means to be successful. I included this statement from Soad, as this is a view shared by many former Ishraq participants. More importantly, it challenges the idea that former participants cannot experience success on their own terms. A consideration of marriage also emerged in my conversation with Shaymaa, a former beneficiary from a neighboring village in Beni Suef. However, unlike Soad, Shaymaa discusses how she understands the link between education and marriage choice. In the following example Shaymaa introduces to this analysis the idea of education as a tool for enhancing one's social and economic status, specifically unrelated to a woman earning in the labor market. This is articulated as the extent to which a woman who has acquired certain academic credentials is able to assert greater control over the conditions related to her choosing a marriage partner.

One of the reasons I want to be educated is that so I can marry someone who is also educated. This is how I understand success. I have to be able to understand him and he has to be able to understand me. I mean, education is light and it is something very nice and one can have a nice life this way. When I finished middle school and went to apply to high school a distant cousin of mine came to propose, and he has a high school diploma. I said to my family I want to be able to complete high school so that I can have a diploma like him, that's something nice I think. People who are educated are much happier and their lives are quite pleasant. I learned this from this program.

In addition to describing different notions of success in their lives and with regard to their experiences, Ishraq participants also seemed open to representing issues related to marriage in their communities in more complex ways than were articulated by policy

makers and by extension, Cairo-based program officers. Soad's suggestion that marriage and education are seemingly incompatible does not take away from her belief that she learned a great deal from being involved in the Ishraq program. This focus on the tension between marriage and education and Shaymaa's attention to how education can be used to enhance women's agency speaks to a complexity in the experiences of former participants that is largely absent from what is included in the policy documents and program reports discussed later in this chapter.

The following conversation similarly illustrates the tension and complexity raised in the examples above. It further reveals how success for many promoters is mostly understood through the lens of personal and professional triumph, similar to my exchange with Ashraf discussed earlier in this chapter. Wafaa, a 27 year-old Ishraq promoter from rural Beni Suef, speaks about the personal investment that promoters make in the lives of Ishraq participants. Her story demonstrates the difficulty in promoters' ability to appreciate the experiences of their students without passing judgment or invalidating their experiences whether similar or different from their own.

I teach Arabic, and I love working with these girls because I can provide them with the opportunities that I did not have. I was married at 15 and had my first child shortly after. If it wasn't for my husband and his studies in Arabic I also may not have had the chance to study Arabic later in life. Before working with Ishraq I was a literacy instructor for a public literacy institute in this village... I think these girls getting married, you know is a huge problem, I don't want them to make the same mistake that I made. I was fortunate to have to opportunity to go back to school and get a diploma after having children. This girls will not be as fortunate if they do not take control of their situation, and take advantage of this opportunity.

This testimony is particularly illuminating as it demonstrated that while Wafaa explicitly states that she is opposed to girls marrying before they finish school, she admits

that it was through meeting her husband where she became interested in Arabic. She goes on to describe that for the last five years she has used her love of Arabic to remain employed and happy. This variation of perspectives and worldviews demonstrates that participants understand that structural limitations in their communities' disproportionately affect women and the poor. However, they also suggest a level of complexity in how participants describe and navigate the issues that impact girls and women in their community.

Other participants portray the complexity and dynamism that is revealed in the social contests surrounding marriage and education. This is particularly relevant to the ways in which participants articulate various notions of success, or more accurately what it means to be a successful woman. Interestingly, in examining the differences between Ishraq beneficiaries and their non-Ishraq counterparts, I only found there to be variation in their educational attainment. While there was greater educational diversity among non-Ishraq participants, members of the two groups raised some of the same issues about the effect of early marriage on the educational prospects of women. Ishraq participants would discuss these issues in direct reference to what was learned during their time in the program. The following perspectives (two former Ishraq beneficiaries and one from one of the original control villages) demonstrate that participation in Ishraq does not appear to be a distinguishing factor in how these women articulate what constitutes being a successful woman.

*Fatin (Non-Ishraq) age 22:*

I just finished my first year in college, I am studying history and I am not looking to get married anytime soon, I would like to be a professor and leave the country

altogether. My parents have suggested that I get married many times but they know by now that it will not happen until I decide the time is right.

*Yusra (Ishraq) age 24:*

I expected to continue my education, I am now finishing high school. I mean we are not farmers, education is important to us. My parents may have been uneducated but they want a better life for us than they had for themselves.

*Noura (Ishraq) age 21:*

You know when a woman gets married and has a child and her child comes home after school and asks, “How do I do this thing or that.” When a child finds that their mom can’t help them than how can they imagine themselves being anything other than un-educated. But, when a mom can grab a notebook and say to her child do such and such, then the child will grow up the right way and so will the rest of the family.

Where former Ishraq participants describe their understanding of these issues in direct reference to their experience in the program, non-participants similarly acknowledge their awareness and understanding of these issues, instead referencing their experiences in public school or in their personal lives. What is remarkable in what these women shared is that they reflect very different understandings of what constitutes being a successful woman. More importantly, these diverse views are expressed independent of individuals’ experiences in the Ishraq program. These accounts complicate the narrowly defined notions of success articulated in the expressed narratives of program staff and Ishraq program materials.

Promoting gender equality remains the core principal behind Ishraq’s effort to delay marriage and is heavily referenced by program staff and in policy documents. The perception and belief in endless possibilities for participants can be gleaned from Ishraq program documents and is demonstrated in the cooperation between stakeholders that was expressed during my visits to Beni Suef. However, while participants’ perceptions of

early marriage may have changed at the conclusion of their involvement with Ishraq, years later many women have left school or at the minimum have experienced significant interruptions in their educational journeys. It is also important to note that at the time of the interviews, a significant proportion of study participants' were either married (some with children) or engaged to be married. In two cases participants brought their children to the Youth Centers during our meetings. In the end, while the contests over marriage and what it means to be an educated women represented here are ever evolving, its clear that most if not all participants conflated these two issues in making their case for what they believe are the sorts of lives women ought to be leading. Furthermore, the experiences of women at the most local levels, while tremendously illustrative of a great diversity of viewpoints, are in no way authoritative enough to affect the views of those situated more closely to the policy-making process.

### **Notions of success from the middle**

The following section begins the work of juxtaposing notions of success as articulated by former Ishraq beneficiaries with those of promoters, program officers, and those responsible for the funding and design of the Ishraq program. In doing so, I start by discussing some of the contextual considerations surrounding the work of Population Council's Ishraq implementation team. During the pilot and expansion phases, Population Council made a significant effort to study the program's effect on participants. This was done mainly by comparing Ishraq beneficiaries with a control group in a quasi-experimental research design in a number of relevant areas. In developing the narrative summary and to provide contextual framing for this study, Population Council also

included anecdotes of participants, their families, and Ishraq promoters. This was done with the expressed intention of informing program officers and donors of the areas that would require the most attention and further consideration, as well as to identify potential areas of growth during the subsequent scaling-up phase. This study concluded that Ishraq participants generally outperformed their non-Ishraq counterparts in the area of functional literacy based on respondents' ability to write their sister's name. It was also reported that 81 percent of Ishraq participants who took the GALAE<sup>14</sup> exam passed and more than half entered middle school at some point after their completion of the Ishraq program.

Through analyzing data gathered from surveys and questionnaires, this study indicated that Ishraq has had a generally positive effect on participants and their respective communities in the areas of mobility and access to safe spaces, acquisition of life skills, girl-empowering knowledge and attitudes, and parents' and brothers' girl-related attitudes. The original program assessment proves valuable in many ways, as it gives us an indication of how participants performed on the GALAE exam among other areas of the program. Tracking the number of students who take and complete the exam provides some indication of how Ishraq participants compare to others, since participants must pass in order to be given the opportunity to continue to middle school. However, this section focuses on problematizing more broadly the described successes of Ishraq by drawing on the aforementioned concept of *appropriation* (Levinson & Sutton, 2001). In a later work, Levinson, Sutton, and Winstead (2009), reassert that appropriation is

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<sup>14</sup> Individuals who successfully pass the GALAE before the age of 16 are given the opportunity to (re)enter the formal, government school system. Ishraq targeted girls ages 12-15 as not to put them in direct competition and/or conflict with national literacy programs, which typically enroll children between the ages of 6-11 (Population Council, 2007).

understood, “as a form of creative interpretive practice necessarily engaged in by different people involved in the policy process” (p. 768). The authors then go on to suggest that, “when nonauthorized policy actors—typically teachers and students, but possibly, too, building administrators—appropriate policy, they are in effect making new policy in situated locales and communities of practice” (p. 768). This work is particularly useful to juxtapose the stated objectives of the program, an intervention made possible by the GEIE, with the experiences of past participants and non-participants and program staff and volunteers. In my interactions I noted the role religion played in shaping the ways in which participants appropriated certain aspects of the program in localizing its aims and articulating its successes.

Upon arriving to the youth centers, I spent a fair amount of time talking with former participants, promoters, and other staff. I used this time to introduce myself and share the reason for my visit, describing the focus of my study in greater detail. This exchange proved helpful, as I was able to assess participants understanding of my project and address questions that were raised. Throughout my conversations and during interviews with participants the topic of literacy was brought up frequently and in relation to the other broad focal areas of the program. Ishraq Promoters more often than not discussed its value to girls and women in their respective communities in the context of the social, spiritual, and functional returns it provides. During one particular conversation at the Youth Center in Manshiet Yusuf, Ms. Mona (Ishraq Promoter) suggested that, “many of these girls we work with don’t even know how to perform their prayers,” to which Ms. Hanim (Ishraq Promoter) added, “some parents prefer that their daughters

simply do as they are told, which means that if there is something that can give her some freedom from her family she should avoid it altogether.” In order to convince families to see the relative value in supporting their daughters’ education, Ms. Hanim employed rhetorics of piety to appeal to what she described are, “religious parents, who are willing to be moved by talk of religion or spirituality.” After some additional probing regarding the particulars of the approaches promoters used to compel parents to allow their daughters to participate in the Ishraq program, Ms. Hanim offered the following description,

We used religion to capture the attention of parents. We live in this community, so parents have to give us a chance to talk with them about their children since they trust us. Parents around here talk about Islam and the importance of family, but they don’t like to think about what the Quran says about education and equality for women. So in order to convince families to participate in the program we would tell them that religion permits women to be equal to men and that their girls should be able to read. We also talk to them about what they can gain, when their daughters are able to read they can help their parents in different ways not just in the field and doing housework.

This example helps bring into focus some of the implications of working to appeal to the perceived religious and spiritual sensibilities of target communities. It also reflects some of the strategy that is involved in the work of Ishraq promoters extending beyond their role as teachers bound by a classroom. Further, it is an example of how promoters operationalize the narrow views articulated by Cairo-based staff in order to reach their goals of recruiting and retaining beneficiaries. The Ishraq Program final report (2013) asserts that girls and women in rural Upper Egypt lack agency, which is described as an essential condition for upward social mobility. This report forwards the argument that ‘socially-conservative’ norms and ‘cultural’ values as well as poor economic conditions



are largely to blame, and that the Ishraq program provides an appropriate framework for creating sustainable and positive change. With the help of local volunteers, program officers began reaching out to religious and community leaders, as they felt that they could help them convince families to allow their daughters to join Ishraq. While participants expressed facing periodic challenges, there was a general consensus that having access to and the support of most community and religious leaders provided Ishraq the legitimacy it needed for operating effectively. In some cases this endorsement could lead parents to allow their children to participate in the program even if they did not necessarily appreciate all that it claimed to offer.

In the aforementioned report, community and religious leaders are implicitly characterized as the very actors that help create and sustain the conditions that constrain the social, political, and economic lives of women. The narratives that are included only serve to reinforce these static notions rather than acknowledge the rich and ongoing social and political contests occurring between and among various stakeholders and beneficiaries. Implicating, rather simplistically, religious leaders as overwhelmingly enforcing and reinforcing religious social codes that negatively affect women obscures important struggles for autonomy present in contemporary rural Upper Egypt. With regard to the Egyptian case, this consideration emerges from a particular set of historical developments and is uncovered by examining what constitutes success for participants. This in turn minimizes the role complex sociocultural dimensions play in shaping Egypt's unique circumstances, and plays uncritically into the assumption that religion (i.e. Islam)

and more importantly religious leaders alone are to blame for the subjugation of women in Egypt.

Most of what has been discussed until this point centers on the cultural considerations that play a part in how promoters localize the designed affects of the Ishraq program. Included in my encounters and interactions I found that participants also worked to appeal to the financial needs of members of the target communities. In my discussion with one civil servant and the director of a youth center in rural Beni Suef, Mr. Emad, he suggested that he and others from the center regularly provided financial and/or material support to families whose children participated in Ishraq. He went on to share that providing this sort of support to individuals in the community was an effective recruitment strategy. For new Ishraq graduates the economic support was particularly helpful for those making the transition to middle school, as they were made to pay school fees, often for the first time. As we talked further about some of the financial difficulties facing many of the Ishraq beneficiaries and the ways in which youth center staff typically responded to these challenges Mr. Emad shared the following:

Most parents here don't like the idea of their daughters coming to Youth Centers because they think they will mix with boys. The rest is purely financial. Fathers are working for a wage so they don't have a steady income. When I would ask during home visits why his daughter was absent the father would say, I am sorry but I needed her help in the field, I can't afford to send her every time. It became clear that if we wanted the girls to stay in the program we need to help these families make up the income they would lose if their daughters were not working. I use to tell our NGO partners that they needed to do something and they eventually did by buying some small personal items for the girls. After this we would go to the parents and say, now let your child enroll in our program, even if for only one day a week. This is the noble and right thing to do because some of these girls are really very bright and nothing is going to change if we don't convince parents to send their girls to school.

It is fairly common for programs like Ishraq to use incentives to promote participation. However, it was my understanding that program officers never intended to offer material support to girls or their families in exchange for their participation. Financial assistance was originally only provided in cases where participants needed birth certificates and national ID cards in order to sit for the GALAE exam. Further, these fees typically amount to less than 30EGP per person (a little over 4USD). While not alone in suggesting the importance of using incentives to encourage participation, Mr. Emad presented the most reasoned and clearest example of program functions being shaped by individuals working to implement Ishraq.

Based on this analysis, participant's experiences necessarily amount to more than exemplars of Ishraq's successes, participants (dis-)satisfaction, and/or specific individuals taking ownership of the program. The basic tenants of Ishraq remain contested and this is evidenced by the ways in which program staff and volunteers leveraged their positional authority, often explicitly, to promote particular understandings often using religion and its presumed relationship to literacy, community development, empowerment, and ultimately success.

### **Notions of success from above**

The Ishraq Dissemination Conference in June 2013, as discussed previously in Chapter One, served to provide Ishraq stakeholders and members of the broader Egyptian development community with the opportunity to reflect on some of the key highlights and challenges with the program. The audience, made up mainly of civil servants representing Egyptian and Non-Egyptian NGOs, scholars, and members of the media

came from across Cairo and surrounding governorates to hear Population Council representatives discuss Ishraq, as well as celebrate its eventual “institutionalization” or becoming a MoE sanctioned program. Since the Dutch Embassy in Cairo contributed a significant financial award for the last phase of the program, Population Council chose to honor the Netherlands government by making its ambassador to Egypt an honored guest. In his remarks to the audience Ambassador Gerard Steeghs congratulated Population Council for their work leading efforts by NGOs to support broad social reform in Egypt through education. He suggested that the Egyptian Government should be commended for its efforts to increase school enrollment for girls and women over the last decade, referencing the GEIE and its movement towards progress. Conversely, he cited Egypt’s ranking near the bottom of many leading human development indices as evidence that the work towards realizing gender equality in Egypt is very incomplete. In explaining the persistent challenges to addressing gender based discrimination in Egypt and the gaps in educational attainment between females living in rural areas and all other populations, Steeghs suggested the following:

...poverty in addition to the reluctance of families to send their daughters to co-educational schools or in order to have them married at an early age are among the factors. This know doubt gives many woman a much worse starting position when they look for work, and hinders their ability to make well informed decisions that can enable them to escape poverty and take decisions that improve their well-being as well as that of their families.

These remarks draw (perhaps both knowingly and unknowingly) from policy documents and the associated directive of the UNGEI. The UNICEF’s (2000) “Action Now” document states the goal of the UNGEI is to, “mount a sustained campaign to improve the quality and availability of girls’ education” (p. 2). When taken with the

following statement from the UNICEF's (2000) UNGEI "Concept Paper", the UNGEI makes the case for the promotion of girls' education as part of a larger strategy aimed at reducing rates of poverty worldwide. Steeghs comments overlap with the language of the UNGEI, as seen in the following:

Girls' education is a fundamental human right and an essential element of sustainable human development. The Girls' Education Initiative is envisaged as an integral and essential element in the global effort to reduce poverty. The international poverty reduction goals will not be reached without concerted effort to eliminate discrimination against women and girls and to achieve gender equality, especially in education. (UNICEF 2000, p. 1)

These indirect references to poverty alleviation and gender equality are a form of what Fairclough (1992) calls *constitutive intertextuality*, as they echo the principles that underpin the UNGEI. As mentioned in Chapter Three, intertextuality refers to a process whereby texts are brought together to create and transform meaning (Gee, 1999). Steeghs also make some direct reference to the GEIE when discussing the developments related to girls' education during the last decade, representing a form of what Fairclough (1992) identifies as *manifest intertextuality*. The argument he makes for promoting girls' education to a large extent follows the same linear and deterministic configuration as the case being made by the UNGEI: 1) education is a human right 2) education for girls and women is an essential component for the existence of gender equality 3) gender based inequality in education can be addressed through the promotion of a educational access and quality for girls and women 4) together, the preceding provide a basis for addressing the challenge of global poverty. Fairclough (1992) argues intertextuality is explicated by the ways in which authors of texts communicate with their audiences through leveraging previous (legitimated) knowledge, and as a result contribute to and reinforce existing

discourse/s. Examining the intertextuality of Steeghs remarks reveals how they relate to the principles of the GEIE and more broadly to the MDGs. This is an essential element for uncovering the hidden discourse/s found in the texts under study in representing their relationship to social practices and the social world at large. This example also makes clear the role power plays in legitimating particular understandings concerning the relationship between marriage and education for girls and women in Egypt, and more importantly the ways in which these understandings simultaneously privilege certain notions of success while undermining all other forms.

The ambassador concludes his comments by suggesting that Ishraq's success is predicated on its ability to contribute to the social and political reform and of transforming intergroup relations in rural Upper Egypt, with the emphasis being on the later. In his concluding comments he states that,

Upper Egypt at this point in time appears in the headlines sometimes with news that is disconcerting, particularly where harmonious and equal relations with different groups are concerned. I hope that this activity (Ishraq program) will also make, apart from the points I have already mentioned, a small contribution to raising citizens who are not only strong and independent, but also in possession of a wider view of the world that enables them to live peacefully and in a good understanding with those in Egypt who have different beliefs or have different backgrounds.

These comments are delivered in a tone congruent with the rhetorical approaches employed by authors of the GEIE and Ishraq program reports. Ambassador Steeghs' comments link the absence of a modern and liberal democratic citizenry (narrowly defined) in rural Upper Egypt to explain the disharmony, and sociopolitical inequality that prevail in this region. By imbuing his comments with authority and legitimacy, Steeghs is able to make a claim that there is an incontrovertible link between the

principles that underpin the GEIE (poverty alleviation and educational access for girls), 'modern' and 'liberal' democratic values, and equality for woman and girls in the Egyptian context. While Steeghs' characterizations conflate being an upstanding citizen in a modern liberal democracy with being an educated women in rural Upper Egypt, it is possible for him to make this bold claim through leveraging previous knowledge about commonly held beliefs in international development and girls education policy, all of which are enhanced by his position as the representative of the Netherlands government in Egypt. At the heart of Steeghs' argument is the notion that promoting girls' education is part of a democratic ideal congruent with the social and political values of the Netherlands, and illustrates the extent to which policy discussions, and the interventions they tend to produce are value laden and ideologically bound.

Steeghs' comments reminded me of a conversation I had near the end of my time in Egypt with Alaa, a former Population Council researcher. He asked me what I found most interesting about my research. Seizing the opportunity to share ostensibly critical observations (and also playing the role of devil's advocate) with someone very familiar with the program, I remarked that I found it peculiar that such a large number of former participants had either been married with children or were engaged to be married at the time of my interviews and fieldwork. I explained that from reading program documents, attending various conferences, and spending time with program officers my impression was that former participants had largely remained in school and in most cases did not get married until well into their late 20s. To which Alaa responded, "what gave you that idea? Sure, this is the ideal, but that would be next to impossible to achieve." I told him

that while it may have been wrong for me to assume this was the case, it was my understanding that reducing incidences of early marriage was one of the pillars of the program. Moreover, since most assessments suggest Ishraq had been successful in ‘correcting’ neglectful behaviors — changing participants attitudes around early marriage and childrearing— I had a hard time understanding why the program had been described *as a success* in this particular way. I said to him, “why do you think there are so many Ishraq beneficiaries who are married and have children before the age of 20.” In response to my half-hearted yet emphatic critique (in the sense that this was mainly an attempt to enhance the intensity of the conversation), Alaa looked at me sternly and exclaimed, “you are absolutely right, and what you are suggesting matters a great deal in how we should evaluate the success of the program, in fact this is my understanding as well.” He went on to add that, “...what matters most is that many of these girls (former participants) will never return to school, especially those who got married.” This example speaks to the implications of the narrow and rigid conceptions of success discussed throughout this chapter. This view privileges the notion that for programs like Ishraq, success is almost exclusively defined by the extent to which participants abandon certain “cultural practices” as a result of their experience.

Speaking to assumed cultural beliefs of participants and the implication of the program to move women towards different attitudes and behaviors, the dissemination conference concluded by highlighting participants’ voices as they explained how the program changed their lives. The event organizers screened a 12-minute documentary



video<sup>15</sup> ahead of presenting the quantitative and qualitative data included in the Ishraq final report (Population Council, 2013). This very high quality video features parents, former participants, Ishraq promoters, and Population Council staff discussing how they feel the program has helped participants find success socially and intellectually, despite the persistent challenges they and other un-married girls and women in rural Upper Egypt face on a daily-basis. The 10-minute presentation on the qualitative findings that followed centered on the experiences of Ishraq participants, members of their families, community members, and other stakeholders. Through the use of a Power Point presentation, a Population Council Ishraq program evaluator shared a selection of narratives and quotes from the aforementioned Ishraq report. These vignettes aimed to illustrate the far-reaching effects of the Ishraq program by highlighting stakeholder's experiences along four broad thematic areas: the relationship between knowledge acquisition and changes in participants' behavior, freedom of movement and increased mobility, the experiences of mainstreamed Ishraq graduates, and participants' future aspirations. Despite these categorical distinctions, nearly all of the narratives shared included references to changes in participants' understandings of what constitutes a meaningful quality of life, future livelihoods, and employment prospects. This is understandable; as it seems the qualitative analysis centered mainly on getting participants to reflect on how they view their lives have changed as a result of their involvement in the program. As a result, vignettes often included some variation of the following; "before Ishraq I wasn't/couldn't/didn't... and after participating in the program

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<sup>15</sup> This video entitled "Ishraq: A New Life" can be found on the Population Council YouTube page at the following web address; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sz6dlb2UHgY>.

I now can/am/have...” However, when discussing the challenges former participants currently face, the only issue raised involved problems with mainstreaming (the transition to the public school system) graduates, which I came to understand as largely a program management consideration. There was no mention of participants who were unsuccessful in negotiating the terms of their own marriages, even in the cases where Ishraq promoters would intercede on behalf of the betrothed. The presentation also excluded any mention of instances where even after getting married and having children some former participants continued to pursue their educations with and in some cases without the support of their husbands. What I found most alarming was the absence of any acknowledgment of how the villages in Upper Egypt where Ishraq operated are different, or what participants reported suggests there is any variation in their experiences in the program. Instead, the more than 30 villages in the 4 governorates where Ishraq operated as well as the participants themselves were represented as mostly the same, and as a result were more often than not positively affected by the intervention in essentially the same ways.

Prior to the presentation on qualitative data, Ishraq program officers made few references to the specific individuals who had been affected by the program, and instead focused on discussing the social, political, and economic landscape of rural Upper Egypt. This was specifically in regard to how these dimensions affect education, and the details of the programmatic elements of the Ishraq intervention. While there were a number of Ishraq graduates present during the conference, participants and members of the implementation teams were not publicly acknowledged until near the end of the program.

During this approximately 10-minute period, Population Council staff distributed certificates and plaques to some Ishraq graduates and members of local implementation teams. This occurred after organizers announced there would be a lunch recess at the conclusion of the awards portion of the program, which appeared to cause attendees to make their way to the mezzanine level of the hotel outside of the ballroom where the conference was being held. The issues raised in this section draw attention to the ways in which “targets” of development often make up a small part of what constitutes program assessment or even what is included in summative evaluation reports.

### **Views from across and between the vertical case**

Vavrus and Bartlett (2009) argue that power and policy are inextricably linked and can be critically observed at all levels of the vertical case: policy design, implementation, and localization. Moreover, the transversal elements—the views from across and between the different levels — make clearer the exercises of structural power as they affect and are affected by individuals and groups situated at various levels of the vertical case. By most accounts, an overly simplified characterization of the instrumental value of education—to lift people out of poverty and into development— have been critiqued, and in many cases altogether dismissed. With the 2015 deadline for the MDGs upon us, multilateral development agencies in recent years have made fewer references explicitly calling education a solution for all social problems. With regard to the MENA region, ‘empowerment’ still remains the end game for most development theorists and practitioners, where education for women and girls is understood to serve as the primary vehicle for creating and sustaining change (Abu-Lughod, Adely, & Hasso, 2009). Adely

(2012) discusses the ways in which young women in Jordan understand how others (particularly in the West) perceive them, and are aware of the narratives that describe education as the gateway to empowerment. Adely (2012) goes on to suggest that, the homogenization of women in the MENA and the treatment of their cultural ‘condition’ coupled with prevailing notions of agency and successful womanhood, “makes it difficult for us to recognize alternative goals and behaviors as important and powerful” (p. 13).

Two key transversal elements revealed how participants have internalized simplistic characterizations of women in the MENA, and disrupting “local culture” is the pre-occupation of those responsible for the design and implementation of the Ishraq program. Urban Egyptians working in remote areas understand their rural counterparts as suffering in much of the same way as others describe the plight of women across the entire MENA. In these contexts success among those responsible for the funding and design of the Ishraq program is largely defined by successfully disrupting “bad” cultural habits. These interferences inevitable render the complexity described in the preceding accounts as either invisible or non-existent. Moreover, the tropes of “education not marriage” are so pervasive even participants whose experiences contradict this narrative are left with few options for describing what is generally understood as the inherent value of getting a education.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter furthers understandings of the ways in which participants at the various levels of the vertical case articulate notions of success that affect and are affected by local, regional, and national gender equity contests. What is revealed from examining

the various notions of success as articulated by participants is that the dominant perception of gender relations in Egypt is operating mostly within a rigid cultural domain. These understandings uncritically represent Egyptian women as victims of their own customs, possessing little to no transformative agency to affect their personal plight.

When describing the success of the program, Ishraq beneficiaries often cited Ishraq's stated ability to change the course of their respective lives. However, once prompted to elaborate, in the context of what was understood as objectives of the Ishraq program (namely delaying marriage) most participants described their life circumstances as largely unchanged. This demonstrates the tension that exists between how program officers understand the outcomes success of the program, as well as how former participants choose to express the relationship between their past experiences and their current outlook on issues like marriage and education. While some promoters described participants' increased literacy skills and enhanced ability to care for children and family as small successes (despite some women leaving the program due to marriage), these articulations were largely overshadowed by some promoters and most senior program staff for whom delaying marriage was perhaps the single most important measure of program success. The continued tension over issues related to marriage and education described in this chapter take place at a time when the rules of social and political engagement are constantly shifting. For some, this revolutionary moment may mean possibilities expand, while for others they may be further constrained.

This chapter also argues that participants' religious lives and spiritual well-being appear central to the ways in which they articulate and enact their conceptions of

empowerment and success, particularly among locally based program officers. This is not to suggest that former participants and programs staff did not find their experiences with Ishraq to be generally meaningful and/or fulfilling. In examining the successes of the Ishraq program through the lens of appropriation, what is revealed is participants' experiences cannot be simply reduced to responses to base-line and end-line surveys. The products of policy appropriation can be observed by examining the ways in which participants navigated certain structural realities in their lives en route to localizing the designed affects of the Ishraq program.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, this chapter reveals that notions of success expressed from the most local levels of this vertical case study wield considerably less authoritative power in comparison to the views of those who are responsible for the design and funding of the Ishraq program. Moreover, while remaining steadfast in their conviction that the Ishraq program has produced positive outcomes for participants through assessing their performance on the GALAE, most stakeholders also frame success as the extent to which participants' attitudes regarding the social status of women are affected by the intervention.

Disjunctures in the ways participants articulate the success of the Ishraq program represent more than the diversity of views held by stakeholders. Examining the power differentials that exist between stakeholders reveals that some versions of success are constructed as more valuable than others. The following chapter argues these disjunctures are illustrative of the extent to which the Egyptian state is still largely a projection of the authority of those situated at the very top level of this vertical case. In this regard, the

privileged denizens of urban milieus (specifically at the provincial level), legitimated by Cairo-oriented development policy and practice, have become the custodians of local implementation. In the years since the EFA movement of the early 1990s, these developments have in part created the conditions for the emergence of a new rural-urban dualism at the provincial level in Egypt.

### **Chapter Five: The fashioning of a provincial, rural-urban dualism**

The purpose of this chapter is to complicate the largely outdated core-periphery binary that for decades has been used to describe the social, political, and spatial order that exists between Egyptians living in the urban centers of Cairo (and to a lesser extent Alexandria) and the residents of “the governorates”<sup>16</sup>. This notion of “the governorates” is significant as it is suggestive of how participants articulate relationships of power that operate upon spatial and temporal constructions of modernity, in which Cairo is Egyptian modernity and provincial contexts are pre-modern. Moreover, this chapter explains how historical, socio-political, and cultural circumstances have given way to a provincial rural-urban duality, particularly in Upper Egypt. In this chapter I draw on Timothy Mitchell’s (1998, 2002) works on the rise of colonialism and techno-sciences, as they have shaped the conditions for the creation of a modern Egyptian development state. In applying these frameworks to this vertical case study I illustrate how Cairo-centric national development priorities have historically produced initiatives aimed at eradicating behaviors deemed ‘backwards’ or ‘pre-modern’ at the provincial levels. These conditions are sustained through the colonial-era schooling practices utilized by the likes of Ishraq promoters, which contribute in part to the growing distance between rural and urban communities in Upper Egypt. In this chapter this is demonstrated through a critical examination of the work of late-modern Syrian-Egyptian educator and thinker Henry Ayrout (1938, 2005). Together these developments make it possible for revealing new ways of imagining the role NGOs play in fashioning the field of development at the

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<sup>16</sup> Participants (common to colloquial Egyptian Arabic) referred to areas outside of Cairo and Alexandria as *al-muhafazat*, or the governorates.



expense of local actors, which produce a temporal distance between rural and urban communities in Upper Egypt.

Drawing upon these literature and research findings, this chapter looks at how a rural-urban duality at the provincial level is produced and sustained through the Ishraq program. Study participants and Ishraq program documents frame the “urban-provincial” as the model for communities in Upper Egypt looking to adopt ‘modern’ sensibilities, where as the “rural-provincial” reflects Upper Egypt’s “pre-modern” past. The duality at the provincial level that has emerged during this most recent period situates NGOs as responsible for delivering services previously the charge of the national government. More importantly, this new development poses the NGO, and by extension educational interventions, as the force and vehicle that drives Cairo’s cultural war on rural Upper Egypt as a whole. Despite a strong central government with virtually no decentralized bureaucracy, the neoliberal reforms of the 1970s have created the conditions for NGOs (international and Egyptian) to replace the national government as *in loco-parentis*, particularly with regard to the delivery of services associated with social and economic development. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century wealthy landowners ruled over Egypt’s agriculture rich territories on behalf of the state. While the economic systems have changed since then — Nasser and the Free Officers ushering in state socialism and Sadat’s embrace of the West and capitalism —the national government has ruled the provinces by proxy.

### **Upper Egypt and the “modern” Egyptian development state**

Upper Egypt has occupied a very unique place in Egyptian history since before the colonial period. This narrow strip of the Nile valley extends more than 500 miles

southward from Cairo to Aswan making it geographically, linguistically, and culturally distinct from the Nile Delta region, Mediterranean, and Red Sea coastal areas. It is also often cast in a negative light in the popular media as a remote and mostly rural region where lawlessness and poverty prevail. Tribal differences and religious fanaticism are often blamed for social and political disputes, creating a simplistic narrative of a very socially, culturally, and religiously diverse region of the country (Hopkins & Saad, 2004).

Participants reported some of these tropes in relating to how Upper Egyptian parents may choose not to register the births of their sons with the state to keep them from serving in the military. This unintentionally excludes them from being eligible to attend public school, since without a birth certificate these children cannot enroll in school. The State has tended to see this behavior as representative of the reckless cunning some Egyptians have come to associate with the region, while many parents simply feel they are acting in the best interest of their families. In the past this tension between center and periphery has created resentment, and while these national development strategies have brought Upper Egypt greater attention, it has come at the price of reinforcing already narrow characterizations of the region (Hopkins & Saad, 2004). These development priorities also help further dependence on the national government in Cairo and on the development community at large. The demographic profile of this region has in many ways helped cement it as the premier site for undertaking development interventions in the areas of education in Egypt.

### **Education as *nizam*, rural life as *fouda***

During the summer months, especially during Ramadan, government youth

centers mainly serve to organize soccer tournaments for young men in the villages along with Quranic recitation contests. The soccer tournaments take place in the days leading up to the start of Ramadan through the first three weeks of the month. During the last ten days of the month these recreational activities cease and the focus shifts to devotional activities until the arrival of Eid. The end of Ramadan is marked by the start of Eid, and at least three days of celebration across all of Egypt. In the summer of 2014, Ramadan happened to also coincide with the FIFA World Cup. In urban centers across Egypt it is common during the World Cup for café owners to subscribe to satellite television or secure international sports channels through a connection to the Internet. However, in rural areas where Internet services and satellite television are not as widely available, government youth centers provide opportunities for men and boys to gather to watch matches late into the night. At one particular center, staff had converted a classroom to watch World Cup matches on a projector from a satellite connection after fasting hours. For those unable to attend these live viewing parties in the evenings they would visit the center in the morning to watch replays of the matches. As an avid world football fan I was disappointed not to have access to watch these matches where I was staying in Cairo. On occasion as I waited for participants to arrive I would sit with the men and boys (sometimes women) to catch up on the matches from the night before. This gave me the opportunity to become more comfortable navigating these spaces and provide individuals who were present during my visits the opportunity to become familiar with the purpose of my visit in a relaxed way. More importantly, these interactions gave me a chance to observe how with very little classroom space, the furniture in the centers could be

rearranged to accommodate any number of different activities. This also helped me understand how the spaces were utilized during Ishraq related activities.

I did not originally set out to examine issues related to classroom dynamics since I knew I would be visiting during the summer, and not at a time when Ishraq related activities were taking place. However, after meeting with many Ishraq promoters classroom dynamics quickly became an essential part of understanding the different dimensions of the emerging provincial rural-urban binary under study in this chapter. Ishraq promoters across the various centers I visited regularly remarked that establishing and maintaining order (*nizam*) in the classroom was the most significant challenge as they worked to implement the Ishraq curriculum. More importantly, promoters discussed establishing order through employing mainly non-physical disciplinary practices as necessary for combatting the chaos (*fouda*) that presides over the lives of adolescent girls in rural Upper Egypt. “Order”, as utilized in the context of this analysis, is the codified frameworks and structures operating as mechanisms of control and surveillance in modern social contexts. Moreover, the order-disorder binary serves as a discursive formation, where the social and cultural values of rural Upper Egyptians are understood to require modification in order to operate more effectively within the bounds of modern systems of power.

In a focus group interview with three Ishraq promoters, Sana, a woman in her late 20s who had been an adult literacy instructor with a government sponsored program in a neighboring village shared:

The girls would regularly come to class with messy hair and tattered gowns and scarves. They often spoke in a rough tone with each other and when addressing

the other promoters. Early in the course the girls did not know the rules, so we needed to be very gentle with them, but also very firm so that there would not be chaos in the class. If we found girls fighting (physically) with each other we would handle them until they would stop. We never hit them, but we would isolate the girls who caused the most trouble until they were ready to follow the rules. Since we did not hit the girls who were misbehaving we would tell them that we would not let them return to the class if they did not stop. Many of these girls never had the opportunity to attend school before. So, it is important that they know they have to sit quietly in their chairs and respect their classmates, so that when they leave Ishraq and go on to middle school they are the most respectable and professional.

When I asked these three women what they felt was to blame for poor classroom dynamics, there was a general consensus that the disharmony was largely an outgrowth of the chaotic family situations girls often experience at home. Other promoters explained that parents and older family members often employ haphazard and inconsistent disciplinary practices when dealing with their adolescent girls, such as yelling and hitting. After asking each of the three women to clarify how they understand the relationship between the beneficiaries' home life and participation with Ishraq, Fatima, an Ishraq promoter in her late 30s provided the following perspective:

The parents we deal with often discipline their children in random ways. A lot of times it doesn't make much sense. Some days a girl may say that she was reprimanded at home for doing something that her father or mother just doesn't want her to do at that moment. Parents may yell at their daughter at these times and when their daughter does the same thing the next week nothing happens, and it's okay. This is why we often have trouble with the girls when they are in class. They are used to adults in their families being upset with them in random ways. At the same time a father may be very happy with their daughter and her progress in the program one day, and the next time will not express the same kind of pride for what their daughter has accomplished. Sometimes this is because parents don't fully understand what their girls are accomplishing. One time my student was talking to me about something her parents said to her after she passed her literacy exam. They asked her, "What are you going to do now?" When she told them that passing the exam meant that she could continue to go to school they would say, "Why don't you just get a job with your literacy certificate so that you can save money until the right suitor comes along?" Many parents just don't understand.

At the surface, what is described in these conversations represents the different and presumably effective approaches to classroom management employed by Ishraq promoters to create safe and productive learning environments for their students. It also represents a sort of clinical gaze upon the rural subject by the promoters. However, this superficial analysis (found in Ishraq reports) fails to address the ways in which the views of these individuals are representative of the legacy of the “modernizing” and colonial-era discourses of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century concerning rural Upper Egypt. The order-chaos duality was reflected in what was shared by Ishraq promoters—with educational intervention serving as the catalyst for producing personal and social transformation—drawing on colonial-era understandings of life in rural Egypt, particularly in the south.

In her work examine the intersections of education and child rearing in 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century Egypt, Omnia Shakry (1998) writes,

Crucial to the discourses of *tarbiya* was the indigenous concept of *adab* entailing a complex of valued dispositions (intellectual, moral, and social), appropriate norms of behavior, comportment, and bodily habitus. (127)

Shakry (1998) suggests that in the Egyptian case it was not the influence of the European colonial project alone that created the conditions for the emergence of the modernizing discourses of noble mothering and domesticity. The rise of nationalist modernizing projects including integrating women in education systems with the hopes of fashioning an ideal modern Egyptian family, where mothers are understood as responsible for the moral and physical upbringing of their children, as well as master caretakers of the home. Nonetheless, the coming to head of colonial and anti-colonial (liberal-secularist and Islamist) discourses on mothering and motherhood where largely in

agreement on what was understood as the backwardness of poor and rural Egyptians, chaotic home lives. These discourses (albeit in contention at times) produced normative conceptions of child rearing and domesticity, where order and cleanliness of the home and of home life represented the model for transforming Egypt's poor and rural social classes.

The order-chaos duality is also examined in Timothy Mitchell (1988) work on colonial discourses in 19<sup>th</sup> century Egypt, wherein the author argues the practice of schooling during this period aimed to disrupt the pre-colonial master-pupil relationship that centered on the idea of largely unsupervised individual apprenticeship. Like many pre-colonial institutional mechanisms, this pedagogical approach failed to satisfy fundamental conditions of modern schooling, namely the establishment of order through discipline and the use of surveillance as a form of control. As cited in Mitchell (1988), the Inspector-General of Schools (appointed in 1873) explained a teacher's influence over a student as:

...a magnetic fluid which transmits itself in a manner that is slow, hidden, and permanent...without external manifestation. At the moment when you attempt to surprise it, it may be absent, because it does not like to be under surveillance. Remove yourself and it will return, reactivated once more; the current will be reestablished. (p. 79)

Mitchell (1988) goes on to report that colonial accounts regarding the state of education and particularly religious schooling, provided the necessary evidence for making the case for large-scale education reform in Egypt. Religious scholars at the most famed Egyptian Islamic institution, Al-Azhar are described by colonial writers as more like the characters that inspired the making of Lawrence of Arabia, rather than respected educators.

Similarly, their students are portrayed as lacking direction and discipline, whereas learning environments (open spaces in mosques) are characterized as haphazard, noisy, and endlessly distracting. Scholars like Edward Said (1978) and more recently Joseph Massad (2001, 2007) draw attention to how colonial-era thinkers systematically distorted social and political life of the peoples and places associated with the Middle East and North Africa in their writings. These critical scholars characterize colonial-era accounts and writings as destructive expressions of colonial power. Like Ishraq promoters, British colonial reformers and their Egyptian collaborators understood *fouda* (disorder/chaos) as a manifest reality that requires relentless attention. The educational experiences of the Ishraq promoters themselves (like most everyone else in Egypt) have been shaped largely by these nearly 150 year old reforms.

Analogous to their colonial-era predecessors, the contributions of promoters speak to something deeper about how the social and cultural values held by rural Upper Egyptians are understood by other stakeholders as essentially incongruent with modern life. The ‘chaos’ that envelops these young women is characterized as a seemingly insurmountable barrier to establishing order, and by extension self-empowerment and enhanced forms of agency for women. These views also exemplify how these discourses can be internalized in framing the establishment of order in the classroom as a necessary precondition for addressing the chaos that prevails in the lives of young women in rural Upper Egypt. Rather, on the subject of classroom management, these women appear captivated by the notion that order and discipline in the classroom necessarily precede personal growth and development. For all of the discussions I was told had taken place



(by senior program officials) regarding the utilization of pedagogies informed by critical and human rights based approaches, Ishraq promoters almost always discussed classroom management as a struggle between establishing order and repelling chaos. The importance of order as a necessary condition for effective classroom management speaks to the central role the order-chaos binary plays in the work of Ishraq program staff.

After examining Ishraq program documents further and through posing related questions to program officers, I found it difficult to conclude that the mismatch described here is simply the result of implementation deceiving program design. Ishraq promoters' insistence on disrupting certain types of classroom behavior and outward appearances deemed disorderly points to deeper structural conditions and the privileging of colonial-era understandings of order in schooling contexts. It is in this regard where it becomes clear that those responsible for the funding and design of the Ishraq program have effectively taken the place of the early colonial reformers and their post-colonial replacements in their treatment of life in rural Upper Egypt as a foil to modernity. The Ishraq 2007 final report further illustrates this point as it argues:

Adolescence represents the last opportunity to prepare girls for the challenges of adulthood. Failure to reach girls now may well doom them to lives of isolation, poverty, and powerlessness. It also may be their last chance for organized learning and play. In rural Upper Egypt, participation in the Ishraq program provides disadvantaged girls the opportunity for structured learning, mentoring, and participation in community life. (p. 39)

These statements suggest there is a clear link between adolescent girls experiencing organized and structured learning and play, and the extent to which they are able to effectively navigate the challenges associated with transitioning to adulthood. Moreover,

this argument necessarily overlooks the possibility that some young women (even if there are very few) may learn to critically engage issues related to gender equity or demonstrate an awareness of unequal socioeconomic and political structures without having experienced organized learning in a formal schooling context. As discussed in the previous chapter, all of the women I encountered spoke with me at great lengths regarding their understanding of gender-based discrimination, and many described it as a barrier for women wishing to pursue their studies and/or having more of a say in who choose to marry. The same can be said about some of the women I spoke with from the original control-villages, those who did not participate in the Ishraq program. Irrespective of the presence of these sorts of narratives, the lives of girls in rural Upper Egypt remain understood as lacking the discipline that is required in order for them to overcome gender based discrimination persistent in their communities. The preceding discussion focused on the experiences of individual promoters as they work to instill Ishraq beneficiaries with values expressed in Ishraq program documents. While this is certainly remarkable, the ways beneficiaries internalize these notions and enact their meanings is also worth examining.

### **Ishraq beneficiaries: Internalizing the logics of the provincial rural-urban duality**

As discussed previously, modern and contemporary schooling practices are best understood as reflective of particular colonial-era values that privilege order and discipline. In Chapter Four I related a conversation I had with Shaymaa, a 24 year-old Ishraq graduate. In discussing ideas of success she argued that there is a great deal of instrumental value in education, particularly in the ways women with higher levels of

educational attainment are able to more effectively negotiate the terms of their marriages.

Later in our conversation she stated women who are educated are generally happier and that their lives are more “in order” than those who live in rural areas and have lower educational attainment. When I asked her to elaborate on what she meant by the idea that education necessarily leads to happiness, she shared the following:

Shaymaa: When I was in the (Ishraq) program I learned it is important to wear nice clothes and speak in a pleasant tone. I also learned it is important for me to help my mother and sisters keep the house clean. In my class when we used to talk to the teachers in a bad tone they would tell us that it is important to talk to people in a pleasant way not like the way we were used to talking. It made me happy when my teachers told me I was doing a good job.

MS: Can you talk more about how this relates to the relationship you had with your teachers?

Shaymaa: I used to look up to my teachers, they are like us. They come from the same communities as we do, and I know their families. They are also older than us and have been to school. This means they know what we need to learn so that we can do well when we go to (middle) school. When I think about what I wanted to do after finishing Ishraq and school, I thought about teaching. I want to help other girls like my teachers helped me.

After having refused numerous proposals Shaymaa eventually married at around 19 years old. Her husband, who is about her same age, was initially very supportive of her decision to return to school after she decided to leave following her completion of the Ishraq program. Shaymaa and her husband have a two year-old son named Karim who was present during our conversation, and he spent most of the time playing with my briefcase. I always brought extra pencils and paper with me when visiting the youth centers anticipating that some participants would bring their children along. Shaymaa shared that shortly after the start of her marriage her husband asked her to stay home. While she claimed that returning to school was at the time not her main priority, her

studies were periodically the subject of some of the discussions she had with her husband. Before Karim was born these conversations took place more frequently, as they considered the possibility that with additional schooling Shaymaa could contribute significantly to the poor wage her husband earns as a day laborer. However, after Karim was born it was no longer possible for Shaymaa to return to school, as she suggested, “Who is going to watch my boy? I have no time or the support that I need to finish school or find a job.” What is significant is that independent of the complex set of circumstances described above, Shaymaa agreed that before Ishraq the biggest barrier to her personal development was a chaotic home life. She was adamant that the most important lesson she learned from her participation is the value of being neat and orderly at school and while at home. In addition, Shaymaa believes that being an educated woman has as much to do with the way someone behaves as it does with the skills they can acquire by completing their schooling. This example demonstrates how particular notions of order and discipline are internalized by young women like Shaymaa and quickly become the lens by which their world is brought into focus. It also addresses some of the less discussed implications of the Ishraq program.

In examining the how participants worked to internalize these notions discussed above I draw on Joseph Massad’s (2007) work. Massad (2007) examines what can be made possible when “Arab citizens” internalize colonial-era notions related to civilization and the practice of knowledge production. In his seminal work on gender and sexuality in the Middle East during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Massad sets out to examine changes in Arab sexual attitudes and their links to Arab notions of cultural heritage and civilization during

the colonial period and thereafter. The link between these colonial-era developments and the internalization of these rigid colonial-era values among Arab citizens is described further in the following where Massad (2007) asserts:

From the turn of the century to the 1950s, Arab scholars actively excavated and scrutinized what they identified as past civilizational documents that formed the heritage of the present and the future...they were assisted in their endeavors by new European concepts of civilization, culture, decadence, degradation, degeneration, heritage, sex, and deviance, among others. As in European scholarship, these concepts would be internalized and institutionalized as solid scholarly concepts that required little if any questioning. Indeed, even Arab painters, who on occasion sought to represent the lives of the medieval Arabs, would do so following the Orientalist model. (p. 99)

Massad (2007) argues colonial-era borrowings related to gender, sexuality, and more broadly civilization and cultural heritage, were not only internalized among Arab citizens, but also institutionalized in various social and political structures. Government youth centers, where Ishraq classrooms are located, serve as a key site for examining the relationship between Ishraq beneficiaries and promoters. More importantly, they represent an important dimension for understanding how participants' internalization of colonial-era notions of civilization informs the emergent provincial rural-urban binaries in Upper Egypt. This binary poses rural populations as largely plagued with pre-modern social and political problems as opposed to their more modern urban counterparts. The following section examines the ways in which Ishraq appears to widen the social, political, and economic distance that already exists between these two provincial communities. Largely educated, urban men and women are made responsible for the implementation and management of core program functions while simultaneously serving as the conduit between "local" communities and Cairo-based professional staff.

**Just outside the city limits, and yet a world away**

For my first visit to Beni Suef my research assistant Mona and I arrived around 8:30 AM on a Sunday. We met Nourihan the director of the *Organization for the Development of Youth and the Environment* (ODYE) at her office on the south side of the city of Beni Suef. As mentioned previously, ODYE is the locally based NGO responsible for overseeing the implementation of Ishraq on behalf of Save the Children Egypt across Beni Suef. The office was located in a dilapidated apartment building on a side street in a mainly residential area. A number of the apartment buildings in the neighborhood featured storefronts including the building that housed ODYE, where the offices of a used car dealer were housed. The remaining businesses included a convenience store, a car mechanic, and a small butcher shop. After letting us out near the entrance of the building our driver parked his car and together the three of us made our way upstairs to the converted flat where we were greeted by Oum Mohamed, ODYE's office caretaker. Oum Mohamed was responsible for nearly everything in the office, from greeting guests to cleaning, and even making copies. After my many visits to Beni Suef I learned that she is typically the first in the office in the morning and often stays after other staff members have gone home for the night. The office having previously been used as a single-family residence, included a full kitchen and bathroom. It was not uncommon for Oum Mohamed to prepare and serve meals and tea for staff and/or guests of ODYE during the day. She was an older woman, probably in her late 40s or early 50s. Given her age, profession, and that she was a parent people called her by the name Oum Mohamed instead of her given name. It is common throughout many parts of Egypt for women of a

certain demographic (mainly, middle-aged mothers from working class urban or rural farming communities) to be referred to as mother of (Oum) and the name of their eldest son (or daughter if the mother has no sons).

After greeting us Oum Mohamed ushered us into the conference room and asked that we be seated until Nourihan's arrival. She served us tea while we arranged the various consent forms and research statement documents on the conference room table. Some twenty minutes later Nourihan arrived greeting us with a big smile, after speaking on the phone and exchanging numerous e-mails there seemed to be some mutual trepidation about finally meeting each other in person. I felt this was likely a result of not having had the opportunity to converse directly about the study purpose, instead most of our conversation centered on scheduling field visits, which I learned was not uncommon in her work as the director of ODYE. Despite my best effort to describe myself as a graduate student doing dissertation research, Nourihan understood that I was primarily in Beni Suef as a *mufatish* (proctor/assessor). My role as a *bahis* (researcher) appeared more clear to her after our second meeting. In any event, one of the first things she said to us when we first met was that the villages that we would be visiting that day are only a short driving distance outside of town and that we had plenty of time to have breakfast. She insisted we eat and asked Oum Mohamed to prepare some mashed fava bean sandwiches and some pickled vegetables.

As we discussed the schedule for the day and made plans for future field visits Mona paused for a moment and looked to Nourihan and said, "you know, you sounded much older over the phone. I did not realize you are so young." To which Nourihan

responds, “oh, I am not young. I am 32 and I have three kids. I got married when I was 27.” Mona’s remark about Nourihan’s age started a very interesting conversation about “appropriate” ages for women to marry. The trajectory of the conversation took another shift when Mona followed up with a remark that caused the conversations to become slightly uncomfortable for Nourihan as she argued, “27, that sounds later than I would imagine someone to get married here in Upper Egypt. Nourihan laughed awkwardly and addressed Mona rather firmly stating, “Women in urban Beni Suef delay marriage until after they complete high school and university.” She added, “local marriage conventions also make it difficult for women to marry when they are young,” something she believes is a cause for the rising marriage age in rural areas.

She was refereeing to the convention known in Egypt as the *gihaz*, or the sets of home furnishings typically provided by the betrothed and/or her family. For most women and their families the *gihaz* can be tremendously expensive; in some cases families report spending more than half of their savings. When families cannot afford to support their daughters, the bride-to-be is responsible for raising the money necessary for securing the items included in the *gihaz*. Nourihan suggested that in rural areas many young women respond to these challenging circumstances by leaving school early to work, while in urban areas women can wait until their families can afford the expenses. This exchange further demonstrates the extent to which participants perceive the rural-urban divide, and more importantly how this provincial binary operates to affect relations between and among communities in Upper Egypt.



In her pivotal work documenting informal political networks in Cairo's popular districts, Diane Singerman's (1995) argues that the *gihaz* is more than a cultural practice, a sentiment shared by Nourihan and many others I encountered. In the context of this conversation the *gihaz* is one of many ways where Nourihan describes her experiences as an educated urban resident of Beni Suef in opposition to her rural counterparts. This discussion regarding the practice of the *gihaz* perplexed Mona greatly; she shared that while she was aware there are differences between Upper Egypt, the Nile Delta, and Cairo in how the practice of the *gihaz* is understood, she had a hard time believing that a family could spend half of their wealth buying home furnishings that may never be used. Mona exclaimed, "no, no, no! You must be kidding. I can understand if the bride to be is expected to buy a set of dishes or cups, but that is the end of it." Nourihan explained that in Beni Suef and in Upper Egypt in general, it is common for women to buy 10 sets of plates or six sets of tea glasses, or even 12 sets of bath towels. She went on to state that when she was preparing for marriage her situation was more reasonable, "I was only asked to provide four sets of everything; in rural areas women are usually asked to provide more sets of everything." To further illustrate this divide between rural and urban Nourihan called into the other room for Oum Mohamed to join us, she looked at Mona and I and proclaimed, "let's see what she (Oum Mohamed) has to say about this based on her experience with her daughter." After asking Oum Mohamed to tell the Egyptian-foreigner and the Cairene about her daughter's situation she went on to share:

You know, I am no longer married. I have to take care of my children alone and we could not afford to keep my daughter in school any longer. She had to earn enough money to cover her *gihaz* and that was not going to be possible while we still pay for school fees. So, before high-school I pulled her out of school to give

her enough time to earn the money she will need to prepare for marriage. In our village the bride-to-be is required to produce around 12 sets of each item; towels, bed sheets, plates, cups, silverware. You know what I mean. Also, it does not matter if a bride is poor; every girl is expected to come up with this amount of home furnishings. That is just the way it is.

As much as it was clear that Nourihan used this moment to create a spectacle of Oum Mohamed's experiences as part of making a larger point about the difference between rural and urban Upper Egyptians, she was visibly bothered by what she was hearing. She told us angrily that Oum Mohamed's daughter was one of the brightest young women she had ever known, and that it was a shame that her sons could complete their schooling, while her daughter had to leave to raise money for what she described as a silly practice. While it was clear Oum Mohamed's decision was motivated by economic and structural considerations as well as the social pressure to meet the expectations associated with a proper *gihaz*, this is not acknowledged by Nourihan as a legitimate reason to remove her daughter out of school. This encounter like many others I include in this chapter, speak to the ways in which this provincial binary operates. Our conversation with Oum Mohamed ended as Nourihan thanked her for joining us; she then turned to Mona and I and said, "Can you imagine? Oum Mohamed lives in a village right outside of town, but it seems more like she lives a world away." To which Mona responded, "I had no idea the situation here was so troubling."

The exchange that is captured in this vignette suggests the rapid urbanization of Upper Egypt growing out of former town-centers like Beni Suef, have become the sites where rural-urban development contests are most intense. The discourses employed by Nourihan and Mona in this exchange that frame rural life as an impediment to progress,

are products of the intellectual legacy of the colonial period and the mission of programs like Ishraq that seek to “empower” a modern Egyptian woman.

As described previously, colonial-era thinkers and writers have historically cast Egypt’s development dilemma as hinging on effectively disrupting and transforming rural life. This dynamic is best illustrated through examining the writings of Syrian-Egyptian sociologist and educator Henry Ayrout. In his polemic work concerning the life and condition of the Egyptian peasantry, Ayrout (1938, 2005) described rural Egyptians as, “... impervious and enduring as the granite of their temples, and once the form is fixed, they are as slow to change as were the forms of that art” (p. 20). Ayrout, informed largely by the work of colonial-era French sociologist Gustave Le Bon (1841-1931), blamed the core differences between advanced and not-advanced segments of Egyptian society on the nature and temperament of the Egyptian peasant. As a result, the solution to Egypt’s poverty problem and habits (like the *gihaz*) rests on the shoulders of few. Ayrout (1938, 2005) argued that the responsibility of the social and political elite is, “to liberate the *fellah*’s (peasant) spirit from its stifling envelope of mud” (p. 23). The author viewed the government policies of the colonial and post-colonial governments, where the elite in Cairo imagined themselves in opposition to the rest of the country, as ineffective and morally bankrupt. He also suggested that rural populations lack the ability to even be aware of the dreadful conditions they suffer. As a result, Ayrout believed that building a strong rural middle class represents the key for creating conditions favorable enough to produce gradual change to the social and political order of rural Egypt, especially in the

south (Mitchell, 2002). This idea did not take root in the ways Ayrout had intended in the 1930s and 40s, or for that matter during the socialist period of the 1950s and 60s.

The notions of rural development examined above operate as discursive structures privileging the suppositions of thinkers like Le Bon (1841-1931) and Ayrout (1907-1969), where much of today's "scientific theorizing" about rural Egypt finds its origins (Mitchell, 2002). Revealed in this analysis are the ways in which these ideas have become internalized by urbanites living in former rural town-centers like Beni Suef. What is notable is that many I encountered, including Nourihan, describe their rural counterparts as similar to an ancestor. There is reluctant acknowledgement that "everybody's" forefathers and mothers were once peasants. This in turn fashions the contemporary 'peasant/farmer' into a living embodiment of a retrograde, pre-modern past. In the spirit of Ayrout, it becomes the responsibility of individuals like Nourihan to ensure their rural counterparts embrace modernity in all shapes and forms. These circumstances make it possible for Nourihan to understand the experience of Oum Mohamed only in so much as the two share cultural practices like the *gihaz*. The differences between how the two women and members of their respective 'groups' enact the *gihaz* illustrates how the cultural practices of some rural people suggest that they stand opposed to modernity in principle and practice by assuming an unbearable burden in the name of "tradition". The narratives and experiences of practitioners in Cairo and elsewhere are critically important to understanding the sociocultural landscape of development, and more importantly how development creates the modern-rural in Egypt. Moreover, when situated in a broader historical context, these experiences and the views

articulated in the UNGEI and GEIE reveal that despite periodic government interference, the “NGO” has become one of the most significant development entities in Egypt since Hosni Mubarak became president in 1981.

### **Locally based NGOs and the fallacy of decentralization**

The emergence of Egypt as a modern development state follows the consideration of a particular set of historical developments informed by the colonial experience, militarist state socialism, the neoliberal economic revolution of the 1980s and 1990s, and the rise in the economic and political role of NGOs during of the Mubarak period (Marfleet, 2009). As mentioned in Chapter One, much of the rhetoric of development in Egypt during the 1970s and 80s revolved around framing the country as requiring the intervention of economic and technical experts. With the early 1990s comes a decided shift in discourse, from framing discussions of development in Egypt in terms of geographic impediments, towards social barriers in need of amelioration. As understandings that framed development in Egypt as a “crisis in geography” waned, the focus began to shift towards other “objects of development” that were previously absent from consideration, focusing on the Egyptian people (Mitchell, 2002). This period also saw the Mubarak-led government commit to many international conventions related to economic and social development, namely the Education for All (EFA) movement and subsequent UN Girl-friendly Schools Initiative (UNICEF, 2007). These obligations required the national government in Egypt to work closely with bi-lateral and multi-lateral development agencies to ensure the work was being done. Moreover, the funding of projects associated with these initiatives were somewhat conditional in that the central

government had to agree to cede some administrative power to local and regional government in the spirit of decentralization.

The adoption of neoliberal economic policies in the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s, and Egypt's continued cooperation with regional partners to combat the "rising tide" of Islamic radicalism gave the impression to the international development community that the Mubarak regime was ready to support a more decentralized Egyptian public sector (Korany & El-Mahdi, 2012). In responding to these challenges the national government permitted locally based and international NGOs to deliver the services associated with numerous development initiatives. The national government claims it honored its commitment to decentralization through working with local and regional governments to oversee the aforementioned projects. The focus of the remainder of this chapter centers on examining the roles that NGOs, Ishraq, and the GEIE play in the contemporary development landscape of Egypt. This reveals the shift of the national government towards decentralization has been largely overstated while examining the role of these non-governmental entities in working with their government partners' reveals that decentralization in the Egyptian case is largely a fallacy.

Weeks after the Ishraq dissemination conference, five key staff from the Population Council Ishraq implementation team organized a meeting to discuss the institutionalization of the program. The gathering brought together key stakeholders from the across the public sector to discuss the parameters of government oversight Population Council was seeking from its partners in the MoE and the Ministry of Youth and Sport. It was my understanding — based on an announcement made by Ishraq program officers

during the dissemination conference — that when the funds for Population Council to oversee Ishraq ran their course, the public sector would assume primary responsibility for the management and oversight of the program. As a result, this meeting had been planned months before the dissemination conference had taken place.

The circumstances surrounding the meeting were far from familiar to all those in attendance, as three senior officials (all women) from the Community Education Department within the MoE were not originally invited to attend the institutionalization half-day conference. Weeks earlier during the dissemination conference two of the three individuals expressed concern that the MoE had only recently been made aware of the Ishraq. The Community Education Department was created in response to the girl-friendly schools movement in the early 1990s, which now comes to represent a key component of the government's commitment to the Girls Education Initiative.

The officials from the Community Education Department argued that since Ishraq classrooms are essentially one-classroom schools made up of children of many ages and only girls, the program should have never been supported by the Department of Adult Education and the Ministry of Youth and Sport. Moreover, now that the program has come to an end they suggested that moving forward Ishraq should come under the complete control of the MoE and the Community Education Department. However, it was made clear to the officials from the MoE that Population Council worked very hard to secure commitments from the Ministry during the earliest stages of program implementation. This conversation, and the conference as a whole, ended with the representatives from each government office committing to support the Ishraq program

and, to “empower” individuals situated at the local levels with the autonomy necessary for effectively implementing the program.

Plans to institutionalize the Ishraq program include continued collaboration with the implementing NGOs. This is seemingly made possible by the fact that government youth centers remain the sites for classroom-based activities. The conditions surrounding the plan to institutionalize the Ishraq program were discussed by those in attendance as reflective of the shifts towards greater collaboration and coordination between the public sector and the NGO community. However, after further examination it was clear that in order for this work to continue the government ministries that committed to support the project would need to rely heavily on the support from locally based NGOs. These are the same sorts of organizations Population Council contracted with in implementing the project at the most local levels. On the surface, the preceding developments point to the willingness of the national government to support a more decentralized approach to managing and supporting the Ishraq program. While the role of local and regional government officials was regarded as essential for safeguarding the daily functions of the program, ministry officials were adamant that the most important function civil servants at the local level should play focuses on reporting to the central office of the MoE in Cairo. This example speaks directly to the fallacy of decentralization discussed in this chapter. Collaboration with locally based NGOs is understood as an embrace of the principles of decentralization, while local government functioning as simply a reporter is not viewed as the antithesis to decentralization.



There is little debate that national organizations like ODYE and international NGOs such as Population Council and Save the Children play a key role in the delivery of development services in Egypt today. However, the exchange between Population Council and these key government stakeholders concerning the future of the Ishraq program points to a much larger series of issues regarding the ability of NGOs to negotiate the terms of their collaboration with the national government in Egypt. They also suggest that NGOs play a significant part in the Egyptian government's quest to meet its obligations to the international community by "empowering" local governments (and individuals), while simultaneously flattening the social and political differences that exist across various rural and urban contexts. While the Egyptian government periodically interferes in the affairs of all NGOs operating in the country — the most recent example being the draft NGO law that was passed during Mohamed Morsi's year in office (2012-2013), which led to the subsequent crackdown on a small number of non-Egyptian NGOs operating in the country — the sheer amount of work and monies NGOs take on from foreign governments and international funding agencies makes them largely irreplaceable. As a result, government entities are willing to relinquish control and authority if it is understood to temporarily (or near permanently for that matter) absolve them of the burden of delivering services. Also described in the previous section, this development speaks to the idea that the national government over the years has not been interested in decentralizing the core functions of government. Since the removal of Mohamed Morsi and subsequent rise to power of General Sisi, the national government has arguably become more centralized than at any point since the start of the revolution.

To further illustrate this point I turn to the example of the 2006 General Framework for Education Policies in Egypt. With regard to the importance of decentralizing decision-making structures the framework, as cited in the UNICEF 2007 GEIE Report suggests,

The Ministry (MoE) has committed itself to providing pre-university quality education for all, as one of the basic human rights, through the adoption of a *decentralized system* based on community participation as a cornerstone, and through preparing citizens for a knowledge-based society in a new social contract based on democracy and justice... Key strategic approaches that are being adopted, and which are of relevance to the initiative showcased here include decentralisation within a clear framework and a resourced environment, national standards to ensure quality for all, support for and mainstreaming of innovative and successful practices, privileging the school as the basic unit for reform, and strengthening partnerships as a key to attaining goals. (p. 24)

The 2007 report goes on to argue that the example of the GEIE demonstrates how decentralization and collaboration between stakeholders can empower local agents (governmental and non-governmental) to act to respond accordingly to the challenges posed by their particular contexts. The author holds firm to the idea that the GEIE and the 2006 General Framework for Education Policy represent models for collaborative work between the public and private sectors. However, as indicated in the previous chapter, “local stakeholders” particularly individuals who are not associated with NGOs (community/village elders and imams), are generally treated as clients or patrons, but not partners. To further illustrate this point I include the following excerpts from the 2007 Ishraq final report:

Ishraq represents a model of collaboration between government, local communities, NGOs, and international agencies, leading to sustainable national partnerships. This partnership structure can act as a model for other development work in the Middle East. Indeed, as the Ishraq program expands and receives increasing national and international recognition, other countries facing similar

challenges have begun to examine the Ishraq model. (p. 2)

In recruiting new villages to the program, the NGO partners will seek to forge explicit agreements with the village leadership, preferably in the form of a community contract. The contract will specify the requirements incumbent upon the village, which include the availability of a community or youth center with dedicated learning and playing space for Ishraq participants, the option for graduates to enter or re-enter school, and an annual village campaign to ensure that all children have birth certificates, access to health insurance, and national identity cards by the legal age of 16. (p. 32)

When read together, the two excerpts represent an apparent contradiction of terms. On the one hand Ishraq is held up as an exemplar in the same way as the 2007 UNICEF GEIE report characterizes the 2006 GEIE Framework. However, in articulating one particular dimension of this meaningful collaborative work, the report effectively argues community groups should have little say with regard to the terms of their participation in the program. This leaves NGOs working at the most local levels in a privileged position to shape the conditions surrounding the delivery of the services they are entrusted to provide. While this may empower “local stakeholders” who are closely associated with these organizations, this level of authority and influence does not typically extend to the “targets” of development. This is not to suggest that NGOs charged with implementing larger public-private initiatives (i.e. GEIE) intentionally work to usurp the authority of community leaders. Nonetheless, as described in the example from the Ishraq Final Report, the sorts of relationships implementing NGOs find themselves in with local leaders are inherently unequal and productive of the existing divide between provincial-rural and provincial-urban.

The national government in Egypt often appears to be at loggerheads with NGOs.

In reality, they rely a great deal on the services provided and the ability of these entities to mobilize communities. This is especially the case with regard to the many charitable organizations operating in poor urban neighborhoods and rural communities across the country. During a visit to a non-Ishraq village about 40 minutes drive from Beni Suef I was introduced to the director of a community organization (locally based NGO) that provides literacy training to young women and adults. During the month of Ramadan this organization also serves as food bank for families in need. Due to the large amount of funds they absorb through donations and competitive mini-grants during that month they are able provide services typically outside of their area of focus. While there are times when organizations such as these are understood to pose a threat to the authority of the national government (i.e. Muslim Brotherhood run social services organizations), most locally-based NGOs cannot operate without the support of Egypt's central authorities. As much as the rhetoric coming out of Cairo suggests that the two are in constant conflict, it is politically and materially expedient for NGOs to serve as flexible partners of the national government.

## **Conclusion**

The preceding discussion forwards the argument that social relations in Upper Egypt shape and are shaped by a provincial rural-urban dualism, where urbanites have all but assumed the role of the post-colonial social and political elite. This chapter also argues over time locally-based NGOs operating under the direction of highly educated urban Upper Egyptians appear to exacerbate the divide that exists between these ostensibly disparate communities. This is due in part to the historical and structural

considerations that have fashioned the two communities as separate and largely unequal. Furthermore, the views shared in this chapter by civil servants and those working within the NGO community suggest that decentralization is not only far from a reality in Egypt, it is a term that has been appropriated by the national government and NGOs alike to serve vested interests.

These developments come together during this critical moment in a context that has seen many shifts in the social and political landscape since the start of the Egyptian revolution four years ago. The following chapter examines how individuals living in rural Upper Egypt understand the promise of education for girls in a social and political climate defined by heightened security and compromised safety, in which girls and women are understood to be the primary targets for violent attacks.

**Chapter Six: When girls can wait; education and security in revolutionary times**

Emergency law in Egypt has a long and complicated history, and a brief overview is necessary to situate the securitization of schooling in the Egyptian context. Nasser and the Free Officers came to power through a 1952 coup-d'état, and in less than a decade the national government had drafted and approved the Emergency Law in 1958. This legislative measure provided the national government a mandate to deploy the military and the police to forcibly silence opposition in the name of protecting state institutions (Reza, 2007). The revolution that brought Nasser to power was predicated on anti-colonial, anti-imperial principles that stood in opposition to King Farouk (1920-1965). Along with many others both inside and outside of Egypt, Nasser and the Officers believed Farouk's reign (1936-1952) was indicative of the deteriorating state of the Egyptian government. King Farouk's commitment to a living a lavish lifestyle at critical periods —during and after World War II and at through the start of the 1948 Arab-Israeli conflict — gave the impression that he was so self-involved that he lost the ability to prioritize the welfare of ordinary Egyptians (Cavendish, 2011).

In the wake of the 1967 Egyptian-led Arab-Israeli war, Nasser declared a state of emergency. In the years leading up to this war the Egyptian government spent much of its time combatting elements of a growing opposition movement, mainly in the form of the Muslim Brotherhood. The otherwise extra-legal imprisonment, torture, and assassination of leading members of the opposition was made possible by the argument that these activities had been carried out in the name of protecting state security and was legal under the provisions of the 1958 Emergency Law (Moorhead, 2005). However, the

wartime politics of the 1967 war and the Sadat-led 1973 war with Israel helped create the conditions that led to the Egyptian government conflating issues related to domestic state security with matters of national security. The enforcement of the emergency law continued following the end of the 1973 war until 1980 (Sabit, 1989).

A turning point came with the assassination of Anwar Sadat and the reinstatement of the emergency law in 1981 some 18 months after it had been suspended. In the decades since the neoliberal reforms of the late-1970s and after Hosni Mubarak assumed the presidency in 1981, the function of the emergency law has shifted dramatically with the focus of the military moving away from protecting the nation from foreign enemies to securing the state from potentially destabilizing political forces from within the country (Reza, 2007). Through the subsequent Mubarak period (1981-2011) there was great cooperation between the military and the security apparatuses, most of which are housed in the Ministry of Interior. While the Ministry of Interior has been in existence since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, its primary role since the early 1980s has been to support the military and the office of the president by protecting national interests from disturbances emanating largely from civil society. From 1981 until May 2012 the emergency law was renewed every three years, and was used to interrupt any and all forms of public action understood as disruptive to the Egyptian state (Amar, 2013).

Before the start of the 2011 revolution, one of the most egregious attacks by the Egyptian state on civil and political rights was the suppression of the Mehalla textile workers protest in 2008. In April 2008 thousands of residents of the Nile-Delta city of Mehalla El-Kubra filed into the streets protesting the deteriorating working conditions in

the state-run textile industries and in the surrounding communities at large (El-Mahdi & Marfleet, 2009). The demonstrations were met with violent opposition from State Security forces, and two people including a teenage boy were killed by police officers. While hundreds of residents in Cairo and Alexandria also took to the streets in solidarity, in the end, 49 people (mainly residents of Mehalla) were arrested and later convicted by the Emergency Supreme State Security Court for their participation in the general strike (El-Mahdi & Marfleet, 2009).

In the weeks leading up to the 2012 presidential election that saw Freedom and Justice Party candidate Mohamed Morsi claim victory, the Emergency Law expired and was not renewed. However, in June 2012 the military government, which assumed leadership of the country after the overthrow of Mubarak imposed martial law. While technically this was not a renewal of the Emergency Law, the decree made under the direction of Field Marshal Tantawi granted the military the authority to indefinitely detain and try civilians in military courts. Following the overthrow of president Morsi, in August 2013 acting president Adly Mansour renewed the Emergency Law when he declared a state of emergency (Amar, 2013).

The preceding illustrates how the 1958 Emergency Law has for over a half-century helped normalize repression and violence against Egyptian citizens in the name of state security. The overthrow of Morsi and the subsequent ascent of General Sisi to the presidency represent a new shift in how Egyptian State Security understands and responds to political dissent. In this chapter I argue that what Amar (2013) calls “humanitarian securitization” in Egypt has led to the dwindling of civil and personal



rights in the country. The logics employed by the military establishment and the Ministry of Interior discursively frame those who support or oppose the extrajudicial measures used for the sake of security as either “authentic” and “noble” Egyptians or enemies of the state. This chapter also explains that the rhetoric of securitization has shifted significantly since the start of the revolution and has remained dynamic through the most recent shift, the removal of former Freedom and Justice Party president Mohamed Morsi in July 2013.

The experiences of those associated with the Ishraq program and others living in rural and urban Beni Suef represent the ways in which the rhetoric of securitization is taken up outside of large urban centers. In rural communities across Upper Egypt, coming to terms with state-sanctioned security narratives has lead some families to either remove their daughters from school altogether or decide against sending their girls to schools in communities where they do not live. As a result, the “education can wait” discourses that have emerged in the last 18 months frame family choice about education for girls as pragmatic matters of safety and security, rather than cultural opposition to empowerment and economic independence. The emerging dualism between provincial-urban and rural discussed in the previous chapter appears to play a part in the reproduction and prevalence of notions of safety and security. This is particularly case for girls living in rural areas looking to attend any post-secondary institution, as most secondary schools require travel to provincial capitals. This chapter reveals that while an embrace of the rhetoric of humanitarian securitization is otherwise commendable, in this current social and political climate these actions subvert and undermine broader national

strategies that frame education for girls and women as integral to economic growth and development.

### **Human security and the Egyptian revolution**

Shortly after the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) assumed responsibility of the affairs of the State (after the removal of Mubarak in February 2011), there was mounting pressure from an emboldened populous for the transitional government to address past and current discretions of the Ministry of Interior. Under the leadership of the de-facto head of state and defense minister Field Marshall Mohamed Hussein Tantawi, the government worked to re-build trust between private citizens and the local police. At the same time the military police and courts detained and hastily convicted protestors and agitators whose actions were believed to be detrimental to the security and stability of the Egyptian State (Amar, 2013).

The victory of Freedom and Justice Party candidate Mohamed Morsi in the 2012 Presidential Election and his subsequent removal of Field Marshal Tantawi as defense minister represented a temporary but significant shift in how the State sanctioned action regarding issues of safety and security. The popular uprising that started in January of 2011 may have caused Mubarak to step down as head of state, however that did not result in the purging of all individuals loyal to the National Democratic Party or the military establishment from holding positions of power. As a result, Morsi's one year as president was marked by a clear power struggle between his supporters from within the Muslim Brotherhood, forces loyal to the broader military establishment, and supporters of former president Mubarak.

The removal of president Mohamed Morsi in July 2013 and the periods of intermittent violence that ensued between government security forces and supporters of the former president add an additional layer of complexity with regard to Egyptians' perceptions of safety, security, and stability in the country. The threat of social and political violence and coercive action by governmental and non-governmental forces, through hired thugs and vigilantes, is most intense in communities and locales seen as historically supportive of opposition groups. This is especially true for those more aligned with now dissolved "Islamic" social and political organizations, namely the Muslim Brotherhood. Outside of the major metropolitan areas of Cairo and Alexandria, the climate of fear has been most apparent in Upper Egyptian governorates — particularly Beni Suef, Minya, and Fayoum — as these areas are understood for the last century as home to members of the Muslim Brotherhood (Guerin, 2014).

In his comparative work examining securitization and sexuality politics in contemporary Egypt and Brazil, Paul Amar (2013) argues the intervention of the military and security forces during this 30-month period was undertaken with the pretext of securing the humanity and dignity of the nation from the turmoil that ensued in the aftermath of the fall of Mubarak. Amar (2013) goes on to suggest the considerable force exerted by the State to protect the physical and moral well-being of so-called "noble" and "authentic" Egyptians from the destabilizing forces of Islamism and Western influence has become a hallmark of the re-arming Egyptian security-state. Amar (2013) explains his doctrine of *humanitarian securitization* in the following:

This doctrine is realized through two processes: one is the forcible protection and moral rehabilitation of the citizenry, restoring dignity and "humanity" to certain

communities marked by gender, sexuality, and culture and seen as menaced by “perversions of globalization”; another is the securing and policing of certain forms of space, labor, and heritage seen as anchors for counterhegemonic development models (p. 6)

It is clear that since the start of the popular uprising in January 2011 social and political life in Egyptian has been affected in significant ways. However, with regard to the rhetoric of securitization there has been a marked shift since the fall of Morsi in July of 2013. The last 18 months have been characterized by periods of intermittent conflict between governmental and non-governmental forces, where violent and at times even non-violent opposition to the government is understood to represent larger existential threats to the security of the Egyptian State associated with organizations like Hamas and the self-styled “Islamic State” (IS or ISIS). What makes this most recent period unique is the Egyptian state and its security apparatuses appear to have become even stronger in their response to these perceived threats. This was made possible through the renewal of the Emergency Law, as described earlier in this chapter.

### **Girls’ education in a human-security state**

The shifts in the grammar of securitization described above have also had a dramatic effect on the ways in which the necessity of girls’ education is understood by development practitioners and those living and working in Upper Egypt. During the three visits I made to Egypt between the summer of 2012 and 2013, I met with many Ishraq program officers to discuss the effect of the revolution on program implementation and management. Program activities were suspended at all Ishraq sites from the start of the uprising until early March 2011. In sharing their experiences from this period,

participants like Hamed, an Ishraq program manager from Beni Suef described the days after the start of the revolution as:

...extremely scary and dangerous for all of us. Even though the large demonstrations in the governorates did not take place until the second week of the uprising people did not feel safe enough to go to the police for help. It is not that there was much trust between people and the police to begin with, but away from Cairo the situation is different. In many of the governorates local people know the police pretty well. When people watched the situation unfold from the outside they have the impression that there is nothing really happening in the governorates, especially in Upper Egypt. Though, anytime government employees like the police are under attack or decide, as they did in some parts of Beni Suef and Fayoum, to abandon their posts people get angry and scared. For us (Ishraq staff) we knew we had to suspend program activities right away. The youth centers are government run and the staff there are civil servants, we did not want to put the girls in danger by continuing to stay open. Girls are often targets of violence. However, this did not matter really matter much since parents by this point already stopped allowing their girls to come to the centers for class.

Similar to many of the encounters I had with program staff during this period, Hamed was also willing to discuss ostensibly positive and longer-term effects he believed the revolution was going to have on the Ishraq program, specifically with regard to beneficiaries. During another meeting he shared the following,

There is no doubt that the months after the start of the revolution were dangerous. However, the things that motivated young people and activists to take to the streets to demand a better Egypt are some of the same things that the program aims to instill in the girls we work with. In this way, when we talk with beneficiaries about their rights and responsibilities as citizens they now have an understanding of how these things look in real life, specifically because of the revolution. The revolution made their participation in the program much more real. Those of us who work in the development field know how important education is for building a new, more democratic Egypt.

From discussions I had with participants, colleagues, friends, and family living and working in Cairo, Alexandria, and Upper Egypt, I gleaned that the security situation in the governorates was very different than in larger urban centers. Also, given the attention

paid to events taking place in Cairo and Alexandria, it was often more difficult to verify what was happening elsewhere. Nonetheless, it is in the experiences of individuals like Hamed where notions about girls' education come up against the ideas propagated by the State concerning what constitutes appropriate behavior for women during periods where the threat to their security appears heightened.

Amar (2013) explains that since the 1980s, the incursion of neoliberalism across the Global South has given way to a new form of governance, the *human-security state*.

The author goes on to suggest that this new articulation of state-based authority emerges,

...as a node of four intersecting logics of securitization: moralistic (rooted in culture and values based on evangelical Christian and Islamic piety discourses); juridical-personal (focused on rights, privatized property, and minority identity); workerist (orbiting around new or revived notions of collective and social security and postconsumer notions of participation and citizenship); and paramilitary (a masculinist, police-centered, territorially possessive logic of enforcement). These relatively autonomous four logics of securitization came together in what I call here a human-security governance regime. They all explicitly aimed to protect, rescue, and secure certain idealized forms of humanity identified with a particular family of sexuality, morality, and class subjects, and grounded in certain militarized territories and strategic infrastructures. (p. 6)

This analytical framework is particularly useful for examining how the Egyptian State has reasserted its claim to power and authority since the start of the revolution. The domineering force of the human-security state merely accommodated the events of four years of revolutionary events, as opposed to withering under the pressure of the protesters. The rhetoric of human-security has also been adapted to incorporate more complex configurations of power and control over women. These notions, as illustrated in the following reflection from an Ishraq program officer, position young women as subordinates requiring forcible protection.

We did face some challenges related to beneficiaries transitioning from middle school to secondary school. Many who graduated from Ishraq also successfully completed middle school. However, in some case the secondary schools are not available in all of the villages where beneficiaries and their families live. This can cause some parents anxiety. Things have become less safe since the start of the revolution, many parents who have become supportive of education for their girls are not comfortable with the idea that they have to travel to a neighboring village to attend school. I cannot blame them for feeling this way since I watch the news and hear stories of terrible things happening to young women by vandals and thugs.

It was clear to many people I encountered that in the eyes of the army-backed government young men and women were understood to represent the greatest threat to Egypt's national security. Their mere presence in the streets was often interpreted by military police as warranting severe punishment, which was made possible by the decree imposing martial law beginning in June 2012. The many high profile cases of "virginity" testing that emerged during this period helped cast greater suspicion on women engaging in anything that could be viewed as opposing SCAF or the national government (Amin, 2014). In Chapter One I shared a conversation I had with two older women on this same subject. The two were adamantly opposed to women participating in the revolutionary activities, even going so far to suggest that women who travel to areas affected by demonstrations should simply leave out of fear for their lives. The individuals I met in Upper Egypt also made some of these same arguments in trying to convince young women in their communities to stay away from large public gatherings and to avoid travel at night. Along with the re-telling of local "horror stories," the tales of violence and harassment involving women emerging from Cairo formed the basis of the self-policing and policing of young women's bodies that took place in the early months of the revolution.

These developments in many ways also represent the difference that exists between how the revolution is understood to have taken place in urban areas as opposed to semi-urban and rural contexts. In response to the massive demonstrations university students organized in Cairo, Alexandria, and in a small number of provincial capitals, the military government ordered the Ministry of Higher Education to suspend university-based activities and effectively close university facilities. One of the concessions the government made during this period was to encourage the MoE to reform elements of the school curriculum that deal with civic and citizen education, presumably to encourage citizens to take an active role in the political future of the Egyptian republic (Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, 2014). While at the surface these seem like progressive measures, given the heavy policing behavior of the State, these reforms represent the very contradiction that defines the security-state. This analysis is particularly important, as it contributes to present knowledge in comparative education around the intersection of securitization, education, and public policy. Hantzopoulos and Shirazi (2014) are among the few scholars examining the securitization of education. In their recent work the authors suggest “citizenship education” in Jordan and the United States similarly empowers and serves to secure the state from the agitation of critically inclined private citizens or civic action. In the case of Egypt, the detention and punishment for minor indiscretions in the public sphere and places of teaching and learning also serve as sites where the government can exact its control and authority. These conditions render citizens, particularly in Upper Egypt, unwilling to participate in actions that could otherwise be understood as counter-hegemonic to the State. In the case of Ishraq program



staff and beneficiaries this means going so far as to extend the self-imposed ban to any act that could jeopardize the safety and security of girls and/or young women.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, since the ouster of Mohamed Morsi at the hands of his former minister of defense and now president General Abdel-Fatah El-Sisi, an atmosphere of mutual understanding between various political interests in the government has been restored. For people living in Upper Egypt this was not an easy, or even a welcome transition. While many residents of Cairo marched in the streets in celebration of the forcible removal of a seemingly unpopular Mohamed Morsi, in Nasr City (a Cairo suburb) and in the governorates of Beni Suef and Fayoum, many were vehemently opposed to the actions of Field Marshall Sisi. Samia, a 24 year-old Ishraq volunteer further illustrates this tension in what she shared with me during the drive back to Beni Suef after one of our sites visits:

During the June coup, you know when Morsi was ousted, Beni Suef was really unsafe. See this road behind us that we just passed; members of the Muslim Brotherhood basically closed this road, which is one of two roads leading into the city. After blocking the road there was a standoff between them and the police. Because the group (referring to the Muslim brotherhood) is so popular among people in Beni Suef my mother made sure that none of the girls left the house during this time, fearing would be caught in the middle.

When Ishraq returned to programming in the months after the start of the uprising, promoters were charged with the task of grounding the curricular components dealing with civic duties in the revolutionary moment. Some of the activities included reframing lessons on personal and civil rights previously offered through the Ishraq program as gaining new importance since the start of the revolution. Prior to the revolution I learned that these sorts of lessons centered on the premise that young women should learn to

advocate for themselves within the bounds of the law. However, as the revolution continued Ishraq promoters discussed the importance of these lessons in the context of building a “democratic” Egypt. A distinguishing characteristic of this most recent period is that participants no longer describe girls’ education as a revolutionary act. Later in our conversation Samia, in reference to this shift in understanding suggested the following:

In the early days of the revolution we used to tell parents during our home visits that education is important for the development of the country. We would encourage them to see that supporting education for girls can help move Egypt forward. For the people who believed in the revolution this was appealing. However, in Upper Egypt this was difficult because here the government is not like it is in Cairo. There are a number of very strong families here that work closely with the government. This means that the government could change in Cairo, but it does not affect us in the same way here in Upper Egypt...Now that the Brotherhood is gone, people around here worry about revenge attacks on the government, but also on the average people.

For many in Egypt the election of General Sisi as president and the subsequent sacking of politicians and members of the judiciary believed to be aligned with the Muslim Brotherhood, represents the most recent chapter in the ever-evolving counterrevolutionary trend. This shift is also illustrative of the role education continues to play as a site of social and political contestation.

Since the removal of Mohamed Morsi, the development strategies outlined by the national government place great emphasis on increasing the level of education of all Egyptians as part of transforming the country into a knowledge-based economy. This is evidenced in the plans to create a new hyper-modern capital city on the Red Sea Corridor with the help of investments from mainly oil-rich Arab Gulf states approximating Dubai, Riyadh, and Doha (The World Folio, 2015). The success of this new city rests on the ability of the Sisi government to set in motion advances that will produce a highly skilled

and highly educated labor force, and create the conditions of security and stability. As I previously suggested, this development will not likely shift the role of the human-security state. However, the situation in rural Upper Egypt positions local residents as largely in opposition to broader national development goals involving the transition of young women to secondary and tertiary levels of schooling. The following excerpt from an interview I conducted with Fatin, a 20 year-old university student who volunteers with a government-run charitable organization in rural Beni Suef, captures the extent to which the rhetoric of securitization has been internalized by local residents in ways that undermine broader national development strategies.

MS: So, you said that you want to become a professor some day. Have your thoughts changed at all since the events of June 30 2013 (a reference to the removal of Morsi)?

Fatin: No, not really. I mean look, people thought my parents were crazy to let me attend high school in the next town over. This was during the early days of the revolution, but I had no other choice since there is no secondary school in this village. School was closed for a little while after the start of the uprising, but after that it opened again. The reputation of that school in this village, or should I say of the girls who attend this school is not the best.

MS: Could you explain further?

Fatin: In my village they say that the girls who attend my school are only there to talk with boys, and that parents who let their girls go to my school do not worry for their children.

MS: Why do you think people in your community say these sorts of things, where do you think these ideas come from?

Fatin: They do not actually know what goes on at the school, these are just rumors. People think that because I get on a bus or take transportation that includes riding with men to another village that there is something wrong with me, or that I am doing something wrong.

MS: Are you aware of anything that has happened to girls who travel long distances to attend school.

Fatin: Since I am at university now I cannot say for sure, but there are some stories that people tell about girls being sexually harassed or assaulted on the country roads between villages on their way to school and work. I guess this is why parents do not want their girls to travel right now. But, you never know how many of the stories are true, I am sure some of them are told just to keep girls at home.

The experiences Fatin shared here speak to the challenges many young women and their families face in supporting education for girls during this critical period in the revolution. They also illuminate the ways in which the rhetorics of piety and respectability are imbued with gendered meaning that affect girls and women in very different ways than their male counterparts. There are consequences to sending a girl or young women to a school that is located in a village or urban center outside of the community where she lives that extend beyond the violence or harassment she may experience while traveling. Some of the young women I encountered who travel to study described having been the subject of rumors among members of their community. While many described that some men harass young women who travel alone or without their families, the frustrations they expressed were often explained as the “test” they must face in pursuing their education. To further elaborate Alia, a 22 year old student from Beni Suef University who lives in rural Beni Suef argues, “...the only way I can effectively respond to the difficult political and economic situation the country is currently going through, is to accumulate the credentials necessary for making sure I am the best suited for any job in my field of study.” While Alia’s experiences are exceptional in that she was one of few university students I had the opportunity to meet, her remarks are similar to those of other

participants in that they describe how young women experience the challenges and opportunities associated with having to travel away from home to attend school.

### **Implications for future research on securitization in education**

Paul Amar's (2013) work is critical for understanding the emergence of the human-security state in the Global South. This framework is helpful for examining the visible and invisible ways that security apparatuses of the state and the rhetoric it propagates in Egypt serve as a mediating factor in social and cultural relations during the post-revolutionary period. Hantzopoulos and Shirazi (2014) as well as Collet and Bang (2014) apply similar frameworks in examining the ways in which state-sanctioned curricular interventions can serve as a vehicle for empowering and strengthening the human-security state in Jordan, the United States, and South Korea. These literatures contribute directly to an ever-growing critique of globally-oriented neoliberal reforms, especially in education. However, in explaining how individuals work to subvert and oppose forms of control and surveillance brought on by the human-security state, these works fall short of addressing how the rhetoric of securitization is taken up in semi-urban and rural areas. In the context of this study, individuals in rural Upper Egypt appear to challenge broader national development goals through an embrace of the current rhetoric of securitization. Examining the experiences of those associated with the Ishraq program in Beni Suef and others living and working in Upper Egypt reveals that the effects of the rhetoric of humanitarian securitization extend beyond the mega-cities of the Global South.

At the outset of implementation, Ishraq program officers suggested families in rural Upper Egypt were unwilling to send their girls to school due to their conservative cultural and religious outlook. The prevailing understanding being that in rural communities the notion that women and girls ought to work either in the field or in the home is more important than girls having the same opportunity as boys to attend school. As the national government wages a cultural and corporal “War on Terror” on Islamic fundamentalism, the rhetorical approaches it employs are being taken up by residents of Upper Egypt, particularly in rural areas in seemingly contradictory ways.

In certain locales the logics of securitization appear to have taken hold more strongly than in some urban contexts. However, much of the human-security literature focuses on mega-cities in the Global South making it difficult to examine the ways in which non-urban communities are responding to current developments. Among former Ishraq participants and others living and working in rural Beni Suef, the decision to keep dependent girls from continuing their education during this current moment of the post-revolutionary period appears largely mediated by individuals’ unique understanding of the current state of safety and security in Egypt.

When residents of urban areas internalize the rhetoric of humanitarian-securitization, the extrajudicial measures employed by the state in the name of protecting the nation become an acceptable and necessary strategy for ensuring that Egypt is safe, secure, and prosperous. I encountered many living in semi-urban and rural areas that share a similar view. However, those who embrace the logics of state-sanctioned human security, especially in rural areas, are in a unique position to unwittingly subvert Egypt’s

broader national development goals. Any action taken by these residents that keeps girls and women from contributing to the future knowledge economy has the potential to produce damaging consequences for the larger human-security regime. Although it is perhaps too early to suggest with great certainty, I speculate this development will contribute to the widening of the provincial rural-urban binary that prevails in Upper Egypt discussed in the previous chapter. The decisions made by parents living in rural Upper Egypt regarding the education of their daughters during this current revolutionary moment represents an ever-evolving point of contention between individual families and those situated in provincial capitals who are responsible for the implementation of development interventions in rural areas.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter sets out to demonstrate how those living in Upper Egypt respond to the appeals of the national government, which call citizens to support the work of the security apparatuses during the revolutionary period. Many of the individuals I encountered suggested that the tenuous security situation brought on by the removal of former President Mohamed Morsi has made it difficult for rural families to support girls' education if it means traveling away from home to attend school. On the surface, this shift seemingly supports the assertions of those responsible for the funding and design of the Ishraq program, which argue that conservative social values held by rural Upper Egyptians strip women of their civil and political rights. However, this chapter reveals that the experiences of those associated with the Ishraq program and others in rural Beni Suef represent a unique response to the challenges of living in a human-security state. For

the girls and young women who travel outside of their communities to study, the challenges they experience extend beyond the threat of violence and harassment characteristic of the current security dilemma in Upper Egypt. Together these developments present a much more complex view of the landscape of security and education during this particular moment in the Egyptian revolution.

This chapter also expounds on the prevailing discourse in the literature concerning the human-security state. Most works on securitization focus on developments that take place in large urban centers. The securitization of education literature centers on how interventions focusing on “citizenship education” reduces citizenship to the responsibilities individuals have to supporting the economic growth and development of the State. Conversely, this chapter forwards that in rural and semi-urban Upper Egypt the intersection of human-security and education sees individuals engaging in destabilizing and subversive acts through an embrace of the logics of humanitarian securitization. This is not only counter to what is observed in urban contexts — individuals in these areas are understood to subvert the human-security state in a more direct fashion — the rural context from where these acts emerge are not understood as similarly legitimate sites for gender equity contests concerning security to take place. These conclusion draw on the works of scholars in the areas of securitization in the Global South to bring attention to the ways in which the official rhetoric of securitization is understood to affect the lives of women in Egypt. They also challenge the prevailing literature in understanding how the well-being of those living in rural areas across Upper Egypt is also compromised by the rise of the human-security state.



## **Chapter Seven: Conclusion**

This dissertation attempts to reveal how different individuals across the development landscape in Egypt understand the relationship between marriage and girls' education, and the ways in which these understandings affect the lives of women and girls in rural Upper Egypt. This research uncovers that participants' conceptions of "womanhood" are shaped by and shape prevailing discourses and sociocultural worlds, which in turn inform the gender equity contests that take place among and between policy makers, development practitioners, and individuals who are themselves the targets of development interventions. This begins the work of troubling the notion that progressive social and political reforms, especially concerning gender equality, are outcomes of interventions inspired by policy directives. In making these arguments, I first map the development landscape in Egypt as it relates to larger historical and global trends in development and education. I then situate the central debates that link marriage and education to broader national development strategies within a historical and sociopolitical context.

In this dissertation I also argue, in the Egyptian case, failed culture explanations obscure important struggles for autonomy in rural Upper Egypt. While it is generally understood that providing greater access to schooling for girls and women can negatively impact the prospect of early marriage, it can also further the objectives and expand the scope of influence of the international development community. This consideration emerges from a particular set of historical developments informed by Egypt's colonial experience, militarist state socialism, the neoliberal economic revolution of the 1980s and

1990s, and the rise in the economic and political role of NGOs during of the Mubarak period (Korany & El-Mahdi, 2012). The consequences of “failed culture” explanations are that they minimize the role complex sociocultural dimensions play in shaping Egypt’s unique circumstances, and as a result affect how the targets of development experience an intervention.

Emerging from my conversations, interviews, and many observations are varied experiences and understandings that participants related regarding what it means to be a “modern” women in rural Upper Egypt during this current revolutionary moment. What is revealed is an interplay between transnational development discourse (represented by the Girls Education Initiative-Egypt) and the ways in which particular women in rural Upper Egypt women (represented by Ishraq beneficiaries and non-participants) engage in the social contests concerning marriage and education. More directly, the experiences and understandings of participants situated at the most local levels suggest a dynamism and complexity around these social contests that is all but left out of the prevailing policy documents, program materials, and among the views of those responsible of the funding and design of the Ishraq program. Moreover, participants’ experiences with safety and security in rural Upper Egypt during this most recent period of political transition — as it is understood to affect girls education — appears to be contributing to the further isolation of rural communities. I found that this development has received little to no consideration by those working in the development field in Egypt, neither among practitioners or researchers. This is perhaps the case; as these events are often understood to create the conditions for practitioners to engage the field of development in Egypt.

In the remaining sections of this conclusion I include a summary of the previous analysis chapters (4-6), explain the significance of each, and relate the contributions they make to the field of comparative education and international development studies. I also address some of the ways my research findings lead me to synthesize a new conceptual framework for undertaking research grounded in the interdisciplinary fields of comparative education and development studies. Based in part on the contributions of many of the scholars I reference in this dissertation, this approach is particularly useful for examining the dynamic revolutionary contexts in the MENA Region. These conclusions have lead me to consider specific directions for future research beyond this dissertation, as well inform how I understand the potential for this work to make a significant contribution to the field of comparative education and international development studies.

### **The incoherence of success**

In Chapter Four I expose the disjunctures of what constitutes “success” between study participants. In reference to the success of the Ishraq program, and with regard to participants’ understandings of their success as beneficiaries, I argue there is a link between ideas of what constitutes success and individual’s understandings of the relationship between marriage and education for girls and women in post-revolution rural Upper Egypt. At times I found that participants conflated their views of the Ishraq program with their personal viewpoints on marriage. In other instances, Ishraq’s successes as an intervention and participants’ success as beneficiaries is understood in relation to undertaking particular decisions about marriage in one’s life. This chapter

works to describe using a number of methodological tools the varying notions of success as they shape and are shaped by individuals' understandings of marriage and education in revolutionary times. However, simply mapping these utterances from the research findings is not remarkable. Most interventions have many involved parties all having the potential to experience a given program differently. As a result, after examining the power differentials that exist between stakeholders I concluded some versions of success are understood to be more valuable than others. This chapter brings to the fore new ways of thinking about past, current, and future social relations in Egypt. I illustrate despite employing the language of empowerment and equality, interventions brought on by the Girls' Education Initiative remain largely guided by normative conceptions of success where educated women play a more significant role in the development of Egypt than others.

### **The fashioning of a provincial, rural-urban dualism**

In Chapter Five I build on the previous chapter to demonstrate that participants understanding of success reveals whose success matters most, and why. In examining dimensions of structural power I was able to explore the hierarchal groupings where the idea of what matters most reveals that the Egyptian state is still largely a projection of Cairene authority, and the periphery is understood as spatially different and temporally distant. It appears that the Ishraq program is exacerbating the divide that exists in these communities between rural and urban peoples. In this chapter I also argue that despite a strong central government in Egypt with virtually no decentralized bureaucracy, the neoliberal reforms of the 1970s have created the conditions for NGOs (international and

Egyptian) to replace the national government as loco-parentis, particularly with regard to the delivery of services associated with social and economic development. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century wealthy landowners ruled over the vast hinterlands of Egypt's agriculture rich territories on behalf of the state. While the economic systems have changed since then — Nasser and the Free Officers ushering in state socialism and Sadat's embrace of the West and capitalism— in one form or another the national government has ruled the provinces by proxy. The new rural-urban dualism at the provincial level that has emerged during this most recent period (and is represented in the experiences of study participants) situates the NGOs as not only responsible for delivering “development” services previously the charge of the national government, but more importantly the force that drives Cairo's cultural war on rural Upper Egypt as a whole. As a result, disrupting culture through interventions like Ishraq remains a preoccupation of the development community.

### **When girls can wait: education and security in revolutionary times**

In Chapter Six I examine the “education can wait” discourses that have emerged in the last 18 months that frame family choice about education for girls' as matters of safety and security and not in cultural opposition to empowerment and economic independence. The emerging dualism discussed in the previous chapter appears to play a part in the reproduction and prevalence of these notions of safety and security, particularly when attending any post-secondary institution, and most secondary schools requires to provincial capitals.

The removal of president Mohamed Morsi in July 2013 and the periods of intermittent violence that ensued between government security forces and supporters of the former president continue to affect Egyptian's perceptions of safety, security, and stability in the country. The threat of social and political violence and coercive action by governmental and non-governmental forces is most intense in communities and locales seen as historically supportive of opposition groups, especially groups more aligned with now dissolved "Islamic" social and political ideologies like the Muslim Brotherhood. Outside of the major metropolitan areas of Cairo and Alexandria the climate of fear has been most intense in the Upper Egyptian governorates of Beni Suef and Fayoum, as these areas have been home to members of the Muslim Brotherhood for the last century. The developments taken up in Chapters Four and Five come to a head during this critical moment in a context that has seen many shifts in the social and political landscape since the start of the Egyptian revolution four years ago, and even more so over since July 2013. These events have produced a very unique set of circumstances where decisions regarding marriage and education for girls and women can no longer be reduced to social, economic, or even political factors. I conclude this chapter by making the case for alternative approaches to taking up critical questions about education in revolutionary times, particularly in light of the critical effects of the Ishraq program and the Girls Education Initiative.

### **Theorizing comparative education in revolutionary times**

In late 2010, just three short months before the start of the Egyptian revolution, the Mubarak government announced that plainclothes state security officers would no

longer engage in the daily on-site surveillance of activities taking place on university campuses across the country. This sort of heavy security presence on university campuses and in other educational settings was a hallmark of the Mubarak regime up until that point. As mentioned in Chapter Six, in the days and weeks after the start of the uprising, educational institutions (mainly universities) became literal and figurative battlegrounds where protesters engaged state security forces in heated standoffs. These contests usually ended in government or military forces exerting a great degree of violent force to subdue demonstrators. Immediately following the removal of Mubarak and the subsequent political ascension of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) as the main governing body of the republic, state security forces on occasion occupied public schools to violently disrupt the progress of protestors. Understood as an “attack on education” those working in the development community — mainly individuals working with transnational and multilateral agencies and organizations — began responding to these developments by drawing on the “lessons learned” from *education in emergencies* and *education and conflict* literatures. From declarations made by heads of state to strategies employed by development practitioners, education was and to a large extent continues to be understood through the lens of *emergency* and *conflict* in countries affected by the so called Arab Spring uprisings. In a 2013 UNICEF Education Cannot Wait event, Queen Rania of Jordan discussed recent developments in the MENA region and reiterated this point by suggesting, “Our message today is not that children need education even in emergencies, it’s that children need education especially in emergencies.”

In 2014 the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA) found that since the start of the January Revolution in Egypt, there has been a systematic and measured attack on schools by government and opposition forces competing for political power and influence (GCPEA, 2014). The GCPEA, a leading NGO specializing in the gathering and dissemination of data related to educational emergencies, argues that since February 2011 competing political and religious interests in the country have compromised the safety and security of young people as they engage one another. Operating from an education in emergencies perspective, the GCPEA is described as, “...a unique inter-agency coalition formed...to address the problem of targeted attacks on education during armed conflict.<sup>17</sup>” The position of the GCPEA is understandably complementary to that of UNICEF, which advocates the following in the 2009 progress report on education in emergencies and post-crises transition:

Education service delivery has increasingly been integrated into the humanitarian and development response to conflict, disasters, chronic crises and transitions in a number of contexts around the world. However, the scale and nature of both conflict and natural disasters continue to pose a threat to progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals, including those related to education. Fragile and conflict-affected countries continued to struggle the most to achieve the MDGs, not least MDGs 2 and 3. According to the Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2010 around one-third of the world’s 72 million out-of-school children live in only 20 conflict-affected countries. (p. 13)

When taken together, the position of the GCPEA and the approach of agencies like UNICEF it is clear that the two are guided by a largely all-encompassing understanding of what constitutes an emergency or conflict. While GCPEA aims to document incidences where attacks on education have taken place during periods of armed conflict,

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<sup>17</sup> The mission of the GCPEA is featured prominently on official publication and on the organization’s web site; <http://www.protectingeducation.org/>.



what constitutes conflict appears to be everything from short-term political instability containing periods of intermittent violence, to long term protracted violent conflicts. The tendency to frame emergencies and conflicts through this all-encompassing approach is problematic to say the least. There are two critical areas (historical, sociocultural) where I found these approaches to fall well short of addressing the “attacks on education” in the weeks, months, and now years since the start of the Egyptian Uprising.

Firstly, the concern for the delivery of education related services during periods of conflict and/or crisis emerged from a very specific set of historical considerations, namely the end of World War II. By the time this conflict came to a conclusion, tens of thousands of children across Europe had experienced long-term interruptions to their education. As a result, UNICEF was formed in 1946 in part to support children affected by the war. The agency was charged with providing education and health related services to children in need (Black, 1986). In the decades that followed, UNICEF expanded the scope of its work to include all children, not just those living in conflict zones. Today, UNICEF supports projects in many countries and in almost every sector of society from healthcare to education. The organization not only positions itself to assist countries in their collection of data about children, but also serves as the primary global monitoring of child-related Millennium Development Goals (Black, 1996). While UNICEF has proven to be formidable in its capacity to take on large projects, the agency’s most notable quality (in the context of this analysis) is that it has inspired multiple generations of thinkers to develop conceptual frameworks for examining education in emergencies and conflict zones. While it is clear to most that the circumstances surrounding the end of

World War II were far different from the “Arab uprisings” of the 2010s, the international development community has approached the challenges of the post-revolutionary period in the MENA using largely the same understanding. The two are not comparable in many ways, most obviously the difference in historical context. Also important to note, the structures of the pre-revolutionary systems of government in Egypt and Tunisia have remained largely intact (with the exception of the ongoing civil conflicts in Libya and Syria) with small shifts appearing in very specific departments and ministries despite the suspension and subsequent re-drafting of constitutions. Further, there has been little attention paid to the complexity between Arab Spring countries or other historical developments. As a result, statements made by the likes of Queen Rania of Jordan give the impression the challenges education is facing in Gaza are the same as those faced by Syrians living in Jordan.

This brings me to my second critical consideration, which is to complicate the notion that individuals across the MENA are experiencing attacks on education in roughly the same ways. Attempts by organizations like GCPEA and agencies such as UNICEF to characterize education related events and developments in Egypt frame the situation as a protracted long-term conflict. The application of an all-encompassing framework for making sense of the ways in which education is affected by the conflicts and crises taking place in the MENA represents a fundamental misunderstanding of the complex social and political developments that have taken place in the region over the last half-century. The application of an education in emergencies lens in responding to a

compromised security situation in a post-disaster context is not the same as advocating for the protection of schools from government security forces.

The findings of this dissertation affirm what GCPEA and UNICEF are calling “attacks on education” in Egypt and across the MENA. I argue that educational contexts are sites where some of the most intense gender equity contests are taking place in Egypt. However, the prevailing approaches discussed in this section fail to acknowledge the role the neoliberal human-security state plays in influencing the rhetoric of stability and security, which is understood to be condition of ensuring uninterrupted access to education for all Egyptians. As discussed in Chapter Six, the fear from harm citizens experience while living in a human-security state is not only related to cases where the Egyptian military or State Security forces violently disrupt a demonstration taking place at a school or university. The prevailing approaches discussed in this section do not take into considerations how human-security states actively compromise the personal rights of citizens in the name of stability and security. The sociocultural and political considerations that have given way to the current developments I observed in Egypt over the last three years call for alternative approaches for examining the current crisis surrounding education in the country. This is particularly important when considering the unique and dramatic ways girls and women are affected by these developments.

### **Areas for future inquiry**

#### **Development practitioners and the “modern” Egyptian woman**

In synthesizing the supporting literature for this dissertation I became very interested in how affluent Cairene women from Egypt’s aristocracy were framed by the

national government as an essential component of the “civilizing” missions to Upper Egypt from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. While education for women was promoted through religious institutions in the form of literacy training prior to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, girls and women were not included in large-scale non-religious education reform until the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century (Russell, 2004). As discussed in Chapter One, before and during the period of British rule in Egypt (1882-1922) there were a number of shifts towards promoting mass schooling through public government funded campaigns. The first women to be integrated in these campaigns were female relatives of the ruling family and girls and women from upper and upper-middle class families.

Mona Russell (2004) examines how the civilizing missions of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries centered on freedom for women from the oppression and inequality of the pre-modern period. Through a critical examination of the definitive works of pioneering Egyptian thinker Qasim Amin and of his contemporaries, Russell makes the case for a more complex understanding of this critical period in Egypt’s modern history. Russell (2004) argues that the new modern Egyptian woman Amin (1899, 1900, 2000) believed was the key to Egypt’s cultural renaissance gave way to new forms of oppression and patriarchy and produced new possibilities for women. With regard to this dissertation, Russell’s work brings into focus the historical legacy of the early civilizing missions in Egypt, and their impact on how we understand the “new” and “modern” educated Egyptian women in a contemporary context. As a result, one possible direction for future research emerging from this dissertation would be to conduct a historical analysis that examines the involvement of affluent women from Egypt’s upper socio-

economic classes in educational interventions in Upper Egypt from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century through the contemporary periods.

Over the course of conducting my fieldwork, I observed that unlike in other fields of the Egyptian labor market there are a great number of highly educated women working in the development field as practitioners, researchers, and senior administrators. There are many who are employed as teachers to a lesser extent as administrators in government and private schools. However, women from upper and middle-class families receiving advanced degrees in the social and natural sciences from prominent universities in Europe and North America occupy key positions in many of the leading NGOs across Egypt. Moving forward, I propose examining whether or not and/or to what extent the historical legacy of the notion of the “modern Egyptian women” described in Russell’s (2004) work has given way to the rise of women taking on key roles in the development field in Egypt. This is an important consideration in continuing the work of locating the discourses that guide contemporary development work in the MENA region, particularly regarding social relations between urban and rural communities, as discussed in Chapter five.

### **Women, marriage customs, and the Egyptian labor market**

Another theme emerging from my dissertation research is how marriage custom relates to the ways in which women perceive educational prospects in the labor market. However, since the focus of the research was about marriage broadly speaking, I was unable to examine fully issues related to specific marriage conventions. One convention I found particularly interesting (discussed in Chapter 5) is the *gihaz*, or sets of home

furnishings typically provided by the betrothed and/or her family. For most women and their families the *gihaz* can be tremendously expensive, in some cases families report spending more than half of their savings. Where families cannot afford to support their daughters, the bride-to-be is responsible for raising the money necessary for securing the items included in the *gihaz*. Many young women respond to these challenging circumstances by leaving school early to work. My interest in the *gihaz* first came from studying Diane Singerman's (1995) work on the elaborate networks of social and political participation people in Cairo popular districts developed in the absence of formal involvement in the political process. There has been little written in the literature on marriage customs in Egypt since this work was published. Moving forward, I am very interested in examining the intersection of the *gihaz* and the ways in which women in rural Upper Egypt understand the choices available to them in the labor market. In conducting this research I would like to draw on the experiences of women between the ages of 18-22 from the same communities where the participants from dissertation research reside. Discussions about the *gihaz* among participants from my research have the potential to introduce greater complexity to current and past debates related to how marriage customs can be seen to expand as well as constrict women's agency in Egypt.

### **Humanitarian securitization and women in rural Upper Egypt**

Lastly, in preparing to conduct this research during this critical moment I did not set out to examine how women in rural Upper Egypt are affected by the human-security state, or for that matter the relationship between education and security. Beyond this dissertation, I would propose a study that focuses exclusively on how the rhetoric of

securitization affects other social issues like marriage and employment. This dissertation research revealed there is a significant difference in how rhetoric of securitization is taken up by individuals living in rural contexts, as opposed to those from urban and semi-urban communities. This difference in understandings has produced a situation in rural contexts where girls' education and schooling are greatly affected by participants' perceptions of safety and security during this moment in the revolution. I believe a study that focuses on how the rhetoric of securitization also affects decisions young women and their families make regarding marriage and employment has the potential to build on the prevailing knowledge concerning the effects of the human-security state more broadly.

### **Study significance and implications for policy makers**

In addition to furthering current debates in comparative education and international development studies theory, this dissertation makes a significant contribution to education policy debates. This work also encourages the undertaking of future research in the aforementioned fields, particularly regarding gender equity contests that take place against the backdrop of revolutionary movements. While the topic of this dissertation is understood through a largely poststructural theoretical framework, my poststructural analytical stance is accompanied by a clear commitment to producing some material effects (or actionable findings) that can inform policy makers and the scholarly community in the field of development education at large. It is in this regard that I raise the following as the main contributions of this study.

It is generally understood that providing greater access to schooling for girls and women can negatively influence the prospect of early marriage and in turn further the

objectives of the members of the international development community (Assaad et al., 2010). However, failed culture explanations obscure important struggles for autonomy in rural Upper Egypt. This mutes the role complex sociocultural dimensions and demographic patterns play in shaping Egypt's unique circumstances. There are some studies that examine the intersection of marriage and education for girls and women in Egypt (Population Council, 2010). There are also studies that examine the effect transnational development discourse and national development strategies have on local communities (Levinson & Sutton, 2001). This dissertation research contributes to the available literature by illustrating how development agendas and gender equity contests inform and are formed by revolutionary politics.

This research also contributes to emergent methodological considerations in the field of international development education, namely the vertical case study method. This approach furthers the claim that power and policy are inextricably linked and can be critically observed at all levels of policy design, implementation, and localization (Vavrus & Bartlett, 2009). This approach has gained traction for examining the effect policy discussions have on national governments, the development community, and members of local communities across many contexts in the Global South. However, few scholars have examined these effects in relation to developments that take place in the MENA region.

This study was also taken up at a time of transition for the international development community, with the arrival of the 2015 deadline of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In preparation for this deadline, the United Nations,



national governments, and the international development community has already begun pushing for national governments to commit to post-2015 development goals. With regard to education, policy makers have focused on what has been learned over the last 15 years, the challenges that arose, to what degree there was success, and what opportunities lay ahead for growth and development. Along with the motivations previously addressed, the topic of this dissertation's research emerges from a deep interest in the events in Egypt that followed the rise of the EFA movement. Lastly, with a research focus that directly and indirectly examines the MDGs concerning universal primary education and gender equality and empowering women, this study's critical consideration of transnational development discourse and national development strategies is extremely timely and has far-reaching policy implications.

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